THE BON RELIGION OF TIBET



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The Iconography of a Living Tradition

Per Kværne

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To the memory of
Chaphur Namkha Gyaltsen

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Contents

Foreword

There is an abundant literature on the Buddhist art of Tibet. Not only are its iconographic conventions well known, but an understanding of the history of Tibetan Buddhist art, in terms of schools and stylistic development, is gradually emerging, thanks to the efforts of many scholars.

The art of Bon, on the other hand, has remained practically unexplored. The present volume is the first to attempt to describe this art in a systematic manner. This dearth of studies is not due to a lack of material. The Bon religion of Tibet has a vast and complex iconographical heritage, expressed in works of art which are in no way inferior to those of Buddhism. It is my hope that this study, in spite of its shortcomings, will provide new information and fresh insight for readers interested in Tibetan religion and art.

I have tried to bring together a representative selection of religious paintings and statues, mainly bronzes. With a single exception (Plate 60), all the pieces originate in Tibet (or the district of Dolpo in Nepal) and date from before the upheavals and devastations of which Tibet has been the victim in the second half of this century. The objects are preserved in private collections and museums in the West, or in monasteries and private households in Tibet or among Tibetans in exile. I have included many objects that have never been published. Some particularly interesting or beautiful objects have been published before, but are reproduced again in the present volume and provided with more detailed descriptions. A survey of reproductions of Bonpo religious art in other publications, arranged alphabetically according to the figure depicted, is provided following Chapter Six in the section entitled Further Visual Sources.

The focus of this book is the form and content of the religious art of Bon, in other words, its iconography. Wherever possible, all attributes of a major deity and each individual figure of complex thangkas have been identified. On the other hand, I have not attempted to date the objects reproduced. Dating Tibetan thangkas and bronzes mainly relies on the assessment of stylistic criteria; this is a task which requires specialized skills which I do not have, and I have accordingly decided not to deal with this question, except in one case (Plate 9) where an inscription provides possible clues to the date.

I have translated excerpts from Bonpo texts explaining or describing the iconographic representations of many of the figures presented. In other cases, short mythological texts have been included. Some of the excerpts have been translated before, while the majority are published here for the first time. Tibetan words and names are rendered in phonetic approximation. I am aware of the inevitable inconsistencies which this procedure entails, but as the Tibetan spelling is given whenever a word or a name occurs for the first time (and in many cases repeated

if necessary), confusion can be avoided.

This book would not have materialized without the encouragement, practical assistance and extraordinary patience of many friends and well-wishers. First and foremost I must thank those who have provided much of the material presented in this book. Many collectors have allowed me to reproduce objects from their collections. A number of museums and librairies have also kindly provided photos of objects from their collections: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (Plate 14), Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich (Plate 5), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Plate 15), Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin (Plates 7, 23 and 59) and Völkerkundemuseum der Universität Zürich (Plate 27).

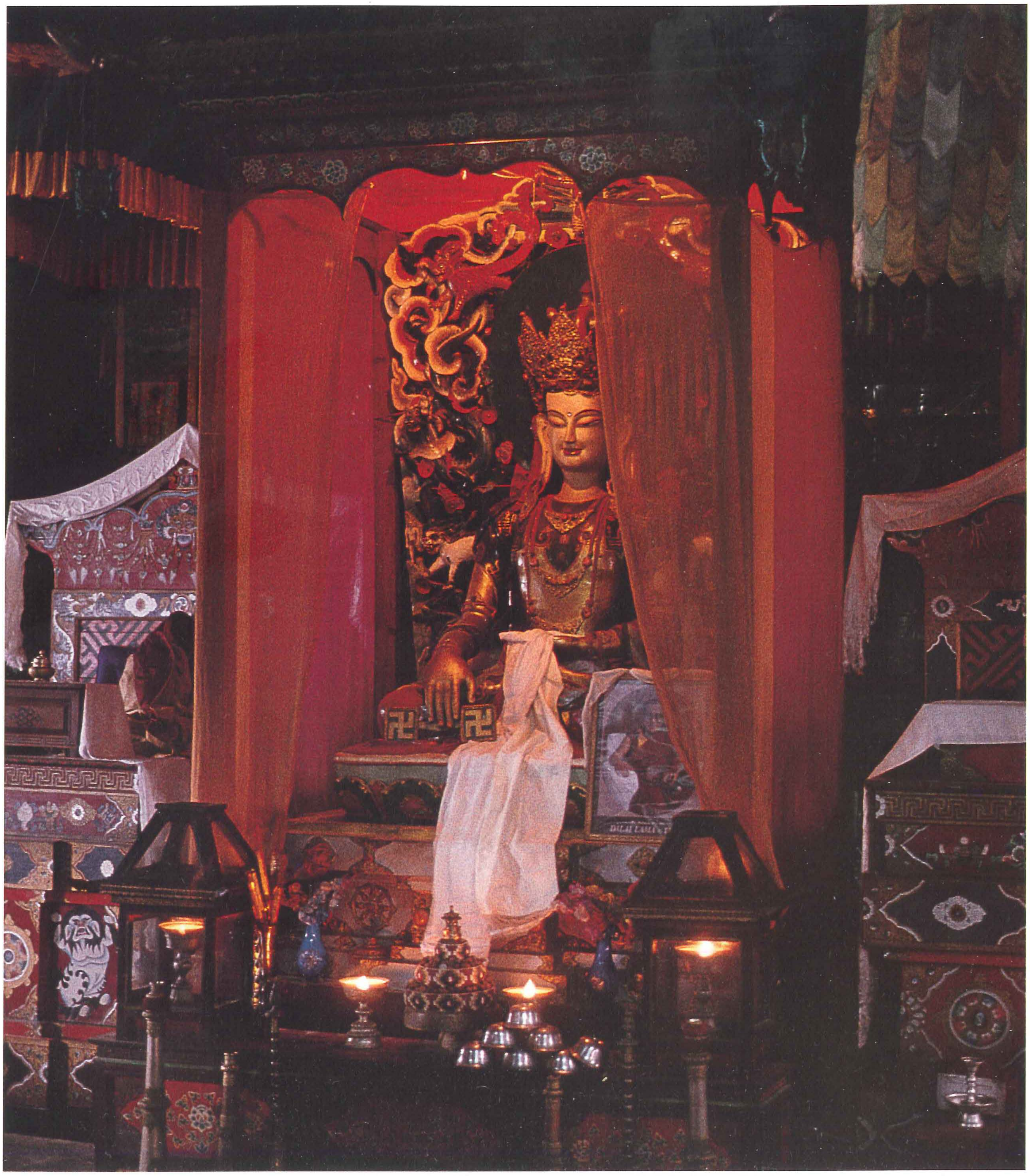
During a journey to Tibet in 1988, I had the opportunity to photograph a considerable number of thangkas which had escaped the havoc of the Cultural Revolution. Some of these thangkas, or details from them, are reproduced in this volume. Other thangkas and bronzes have been photographed in Tibet or Nepal by friends who have generously placed their photos at my disposal. For this, I would like to express my gratitude to Geshe Tenzin Wangyal (Plates 20, 22, 25 and 37), Michael Henss (Plate 16) and Charles Ramble (Plates 45 and 48).

I gratefully acknowledge permission from the Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, New York, for permission to reprint the invocation found on pp. 75-77, originally published in my article "A Preliminary Study of the Bonpo Diety Khro-bo gtso-mchog mkha'-'gying" in: Laurence Epstein and Richard F. Sherburne (eds.), *Reflections on Tibetan Culture. Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie* (1990). I also thank l'Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, Bruxelles, for allowing me to include my article "A Bonpo Version of the Wheel of Existence", published in Michel Strickmann (ed.), *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, Volume One, Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques vol. xx (1981), as Chapter Six of this book.

I thank Anthony Aris, Joachim Baader, Gilles Béguin, Richard E. Ernst, Michael Henss and Louis and Pia Van der Wee for constant and enthusiastic support and encouragement in many ways. Thanks are also due to Lorenzo Alessandri, Erberto Lo Bue, Steven R. Krolik, Michel Postel, Helga Uebach and Rainer Waldschmidt. Chaphur Namkha Gyaltsen, who sadly and unexpectedly passed away on March 19th 1995, carefully identified all the figures on several thangkas (Plates 11, 30, 38 and 39) where I found myself unable to analyse the teeming entourage of the principal deity; without his help, the usefulness of this book would have been considerably reduced. I am grateful to Patrick Booz for his careful editing and many useful suggestions. Samten G. Karmay read the entire work before it went to press, and contributed several timely corrections for which I am most grateful, in particular for the conclusive identification of the main deity on Plate 17 as Shenlha Wökar; for technical reasons the plate has retained its position instead of being placed with the other plates showing this deity.

Much of the groundwork for this book was done during the years 1989-91 when I had the privilege of a full-time research scholarship from the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (Copenhagen). I herewith express my gratitude to NIAS for its financial and institutional support, making academic freedom not just an ideal but a reality. Finally, the publication of this book has benefited from a grant from the Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture (Oslo), for which the Institute is to be warmly thanked.

PER KVÆRNE



Introduction

Tibet is universally regarded as the homeland of one of the major Buddhist civilizations of Asia. Introduced into Tibet in the seventh and eighth centuries, Buddhism soon became the dominant religion. Although Chinese influences were not altogether absent during the initial period of Buddhist activity in Tibet, it was above all to the Indian subcontinent (including Kashmir and the Kathmandu Valley) that the Tibetans turned for their sacred scriptures and traditions of philosophy, art and learning, and monastic life was organized on the whole according to Indian models.[1]

With its many centres of learning and places of pilgrimage connected with the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni, India became, in the minds of most Tibetans, a holy land of religion. This remained true even after the Muslim conquest of northern India in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries caused Buddhism in India to disappear and gradually brought the flow of Tibetan pilgrims to a virtual standstill.

Not all Tibetans, however, regarded India as the source of their religious traditions. Since the tenth or eleventh century and until the present day there have been two organized religious traditions in Tibet: Buddhism and a faith that is referred to by its Tibetan name, Bon.[2]

Western scholars have adopted the Tibetan term *bön* (*bon*) together with the corresponding adjective *bönpo* (*bon po*) to refer to ancient pre-Buddhist as well as later non-Buddhist religious beliefs and practices in Tibet. Hence, in the context of Western scholarship, 'Bon' has no less than three significations:

1. The pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet which was gradually suppressed by Buddhism in the eighth and ninth centuries. This religion, only imperfectly reconstructed on the basis of ancient documents, appears to have focused on the person of the king, who was regarded as sacred and possessing supernatural powers. Elaborate rituals were carried out by professional priests known as *bönpo*. It is possible that their religious doctrines and practices were called *bön* (although scholars disagree on this point); certainly they were so designated in the later, predominantly Buddhist historiographical literature. In any case, their religious system was essentially different from Buddhism. Thus, the rituals performed by the ancient Bonpo priests were above all concerned with ensuring that the soul of a dead person was conducted safely to a postmortem land of bliss by an appropriate animal—usually a yak, a horse or a sheep—which was sacrificed in the course of the funerary rites. Offerings of food, drink and precious objects, and, in the case of kings, even of servants and ministers, likewise accompanied the dead. The purpose of these rites was twofold: on the one hand, to ensure the happiness of the deceased in the land of the dead, and on the other, to obtain their beneficial influence for the welfare and fertility of the living.

Tönpa Shenrap (sTon pa gShen rab), the Teacher of Bon; main image in the temple of the Bonpo Monastery at Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh, India.

2. Bon may also refer to a religion that appeared in Tibet in the tenth and eleventh centuries, at the same time that Buddhism, introduced once again from India after a period of decline in Tibet, became dominant. This religion, which has continued as an unbroken tradition until the present day, has numerous and obvious points of similarity with Buddhism with regard to doctrine and practice, so much so that its status as a distinct religion has been doubted. Some scholars (among them the present author in earlier publications) have suggested that it could most adequately be described as an unorthodox form of Buddhism.[3] The fact that the adherents of this religion, the Bonpos—of whom there are many thousands in Tibet and in exile today—maintain that their religion is anterior to Buddhism in Tibet, and, in fact, identical with the pre-Buddhist Bon religion, has tended to be either contradicted or ignored by Western scholars. Tibetan Buddhists, however, also regard Bon as a distinct religion, and it will be argued below that this claim is justified if one emphasizes aspects such as concepts of religious authority, legitimation and history rather than rituals, metaphysical doctrine and monastic discipline.[4]

3. Bon is sometimes used to designate a vast and amorphous body of popular beliefs, including divination, the cult of local deities and conceptions of the soul. Tibetan usage does not, however, traditionally refer to such beliefs as 'Bon', and since they do not form an essential part of Buddhism or of Bon (in the sense of the word outlined under point 2 above), a more appropriate term is that coined by R.A. Stein, viz. 'the nameless religion'.[5]

Even if one leaves this third sense of 'Bon' aside, the usual view of Bon in the West has been less than accurate. This is particularly true of the continuous, living religion called 'Bon' (point 2 outlined above) which has often been characterized as 'shamanism' or 'animism', and as such, regarded as a continuation of what supposedly were the religious practices prevalent in Tibet before the coming of Buddhism.[6] It is worth noting that the argument in support of this view is a circular one, the presence of such elements in the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet being inferred from their existence in present-day popular religious practices. Further, the later, so-called 'developed' Bon religion was often described in distinctly unfavourable terms as a perversion of Buddhism, a kind of marginal countercurrent in which elements of Buddhist doctrine and practice had either been shamelessly copied, or else inverted and distorted in a manner which was compared with the mediaeval satanistic cults of Europe (no matter whether such cults ever actually existed or not).[7] This view of Bon was, however, not founded on first-hand research, but on certain polemical writings by Tibetan Buddhist critics of Bon, who tended to employ standard terms of polemical invective. It is only since the mid-1960s that a more adequate understanding of Bon has emerged, first and foremost thanks to the efforts of David L. Snellgrove.[8]

The religious art and iconography of Bon in the second sense of the word outlined above are the topics of this book. This is the religion that emerged in the tenth and eleventh centuries (at least in its present form) and which still flourishes today. Of the pre-Buddhist (or, if one prefers, the pre-seventh-century) art of Tibet almost nothing is known, and iconographical expressions of folk beliefs are for the most part integrated in either the Bonpo or the Buddhist traditions.

An adherent of the Bon religion is called Bonpo. A Bonpo is a 'believer in Bon', and for him Bon signifies 'Truth', 'Reality' or the eternal, unchanging Doctrine in

which Truth and Reality are expressed. Thus, Bon has the same range of connotations for its adherents as the Tibetan word *chö* (*chos*, translating the Sanskrit term *dharma*) has for Buddhists.



Yungdrung (g.yung drung, *Sanskrit* svāstika), *turning counter-clockwise in the manner characteristic of Bon. This ritual card,* tsakli (tsag li), *is painted in five colours representing the five elements, and inscribed with the 'Five Heroic Syllables':* YANG, RAM, KANG, SRUM *and* OM *(cf. Kværne 1985: 9 and 16).*

Although limited to Tibet, Bon regards itself as a universal religion in the sense that its doctrines are true and valid for all humanity. The Bonpos also believe that in former times Bon was propagated in many parts of the world (as conceived in their traditional cosmology). For this reason, it is called 'Eternal Bon', *yungdrung bön* (*g.yung drung bon*). The importance of the term *yungdrung*, 'eternal, unchanging', which for Tibetan Buddhists, but not for Bonpos, translates the Sanskrit term *svāstika*, explains the frequent appearance in Bonpo iconography of the swastika, which is its symbol. In Bonpo usage, the term *yungdrung* corresponds in many respects to the Buddhist term *dorje* (*rdo rje*, Sanskrit *vajra*). The Bonpo swastika, however, turns to the left, i.e. counter-clockwise, while the Buddhist version turns to the right. This is but one of innumerable examples of a characteristic (although superficial) difference between Bon and Buddhism; in Bon, the sacred movement is always counter-clockwise. This is not, however, an expression of protest, much less of a spirit of perversion; it is, so the Bonpos believe, simply the normal ritual direction which contributes, ultimately, to moral purification and spiritual enlightenment. Several basic terms in the Bon religion contain the word *yungdrung*; thus, beings who have advanced on the path of enlightenment are known as *yungdrung sempa* (*g.yung drung sems dpa'*), corresponding to the Buddhist term *vajrasattva*, but in practice having the same range of meaning as the term bodhisattva. In this volume *yungdrung sempa* will be rendered 'Spiritual Hero', stressing the second element of the term *sempa* (*sems*, 'mind'; *dpa'*, 'hero').



Monks preparing a torma (gtor ma) *from flour and butter, representing a deity invoked during a New Year ritual of exorcism and regeneration, Bonpo monastery at Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh, India.*

To the casual observer, Tibetans who follow the tradition of Bon and those who adhere to the Buddhist faith can hardly be distinguished. They all share a common Tibetan heritage. In particular, there is little distinction with regard to popular religious practices. Traditionally, all Tibetans assiduously follow the same methods of accumulating religious merit, with the ultimate end in view of obtaining rebirth in a future life as a human being once again or as an inhabitant of one of the many paradisiacal worlds of Tibetan (Buddhist as well as Bonpo) cosmology. Such practices include turning prayer wheels, hand-held or set in motion by the wind or a stream; circumambulating sacred places such as monasteries or holy mountains; hoisting prayer flags; and chanting sacred formulas or engraving them on stones or cliffs. It is only when these practices are scrutinized more closely that differences

appear; the ritual movement is, as already mentioned, always counter-clockwise and the sacred mantra is not the Buddhist "Oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ", but "Oṃ matri muye sale du". Likewise, the cult of the innumerable deities of Tibetan religion, whether Buddhist or Bonpo, may at first appear to be indistinguishable; but again, the deities are, in fact, different (although belonging to the same range of divine categories) with regard to their names, mythological origins, characteristic colours and objects held in their hands or adorning their bodies.

Even a cursory glance at the doctrines of Bon, as expressed in their literature or explained by contemporary masters, reveals that they are in many respects identical with those found in Tibetan Buddhism. It is this fact that until recently led Western scholars to accuse the Bonpos of plagiarism. The view of the world as suffering, belief in the law of moral causality (the 'law of *karma*') and the corresponding concept of rebirth in the six states of existence, and the ideal of enlightenment and Buddhahood, are basic doctrinal elements not only of Buddhism, but also of Bon. Bonpos follow the same path of virtue and have recourse to the same meditational practices as Buddhist Tibetans.

In view of the many manifest similarities between Bon and Buddhism, one may well ask in what the distinction between the two religions consists. The answer, at least to this author, would seem to depend on which perspective is adopted when describing Bon. Rituals and other religious practices, as well as meditational and metaphysical traditions are, undeniably, to a large extent similar, even identical. Concepts of sacred history and sources of religious authority are, however, radically different and justify the claim of the Bonpos to constitute an entirely distinct religious community.

According to its own historical perspective, Bon was introduced into Tibet many centuries before Buddhism and enjoyed royal patronage until it was finally supplanted by the 'false religion' (i.e. Buddhism) from India and its priests and sages expelled from Tibet by king Trisong Detsen (Khri srong lde btsan) in the eighth century. It did not, however, disappear from Tibet altogether; the tradition of Bon was preserved in certain family lineages, and after a few generations it flourished once more, although it never again enjoyed royal patronage.[9]

It is claimed that before reaching Tibet, Bon prospered in a land known as Zhangzhung and that this country remained the centre of Bon until it was conquered by the expanding Tibetan empire in the seventh century. Zhangzhung was subsequently converted to Buddhism and assimilated into Tibetan culture, losing not only its independence but also its language and its Bonpo religious heritage in the process. There is no doubt as to the historical reality of Zhangzhung, although its exact extent and ethnic and cultural identity are far from clear. It seems, however, to have been situated in what today is, roughly speaking, western Tibet, with Mount Kailash as its centre.[10]

A crucial question—for present-day Bonpos and Western scholars alike—is the authenticity of a specific Zhangzhung language. Just as the greater part of the canonical, sacred texts of the Tibetan Buddhists has been translated from Sanskrit, the scriptures of Bon have, so the Bonpos claim, been translated into Tibetan from the language of Zhangzhung. Numerous texts have titles that are given, first, in a non-Tibetan form, stated to be "in the language of Zhangzhung", followed by a Tibetan translation of the title. As no texts have so far come to light that can be conclusively shown to be of Zhangzhung origin, it has not been possible to identify



A ngakpa (sngags pa), *Bonpo tantric yogin in Amdo (northeastern Tibet). His long hair is bound up so as to form a turban-like topknot.*

this language with any degree of precision. The issue of the Zhangzhung language has been hotly debated, especially since the publication of a bilingual Tibetan-Zhangzhung vocabulary by the Danish scholar Erik Haarh in 1968. R.A. Stein, on the other hand, has argued against the existence of an authentic Zhangzhung language.[11] While much more research is needed, it is at the very least clear that the sacred texts of Bon have preserved a large and authentic vocabulary from a Tibeto-Burman linguistic stratum closely linked to languages in the Himalayas and along the Sino-Tibetan border, such as the dialects of Kinnaur (Himachal Pradesh), Tsangla (eastern Bhutan) and the dialects of Gyarong (Sichuan). These languages are only distantly related to Tibetan.

Many Zhangzhung words are used in Bonpo texts, quite independently of textual titles, and thus contribute towards giving Bonpo texts a different character from Buddhist Tibetan texts. Such words are (to quote only a few random examples) *shetün*, 'heart' (*she thun*, Tibetan *snying*); *nyiri*, 'sun' (*nyi ri*, Tibetan *nyi ma*); *werro*, 'king' (*wer ro*, Tibetan *rgyal po*); *rang*, 'horse' (*hrang*, Tibetan *rta*) etc. Some Zhangzhung words occur in the names of deities presented in this book, such as *tsamé*, 'woman' (*tsa med*, Tibetan *skyes dman*, cf. Kinnauri *tsamé*); *sé*, 'god' (*sad*, Tibetan *lha*, cf. Kinnauri *sat*); *ting*, 'water' (*ting*, Tibetan *chu*, cf. Kinnauri *ti*).

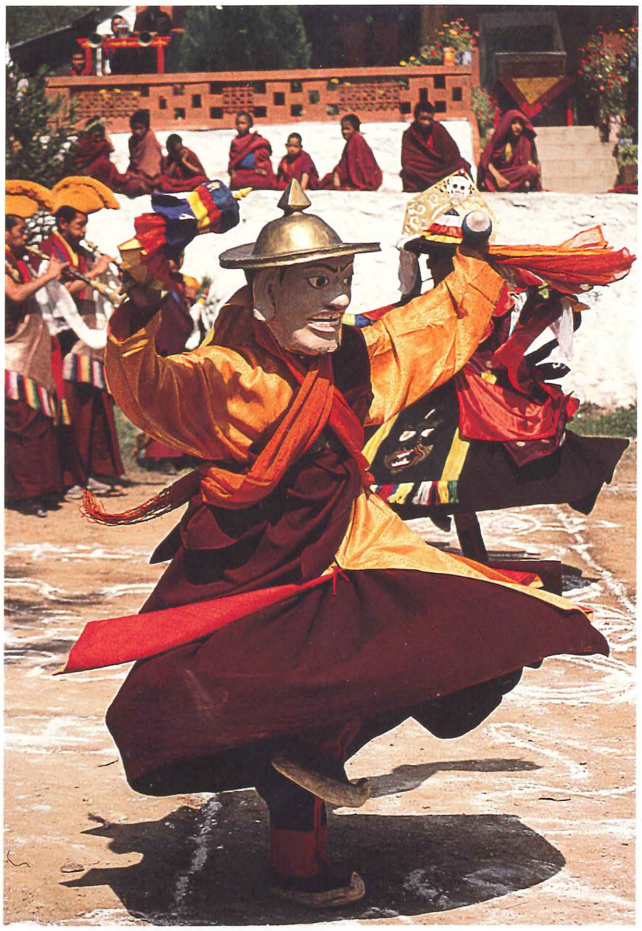
The ultimate homeland of Bon is, however—so the Bonpos claim—to be found even farther to the west, beyond the borders of Zhangzhung. The Bonpos believe that 'Eternal Bon' was first proclaimed in a land called Tazik (rTag gzigs or sTag gzig). Although the name suggests the land of the Tajiks in Central Asia, it has so far not been possible to make a more exact identification of this holy land of Bon. Tazik is, however, not merely a geographical country like any other; in Bon

Lungtok Tenpé Nyima, abbot of the Bonpo monastery at Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh, India, wearing the robes and 'lotus hat' pesha (pad zhva), *of a fully ordained Bonpo monk. Beside him is the* höru (hos ru), *mendicant's staff, and on the low table in front of him, the other objects of a monk's paraphernalia, viz. a flat-bell,* shang (gshang), *a cup with lid, begging bowl and vase.*



(Below) The abbot, assisted by a monk, dispenses consecrated water as a blessing during the celebration of the Tibetan New Year. The ritual life of Bon as well as Buddhism entails constant interaction between monks and lay people.



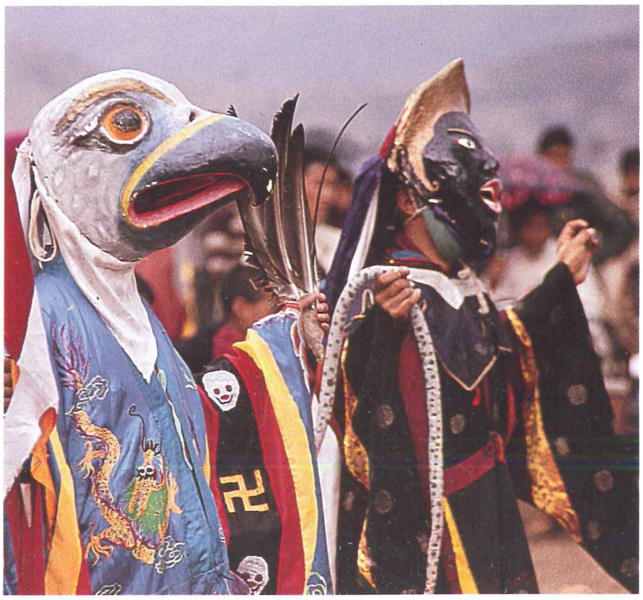






(Left) *The protective deity Sipé Gyalmo, Queen of the Created World, (see Chapter Three).*

(Below) *One of the minor deities in the entourage of a tutelary deity.*



Monastic dance at the Bonpo monastery, Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh, India.

(Far left) The protective deity Drakpa Sengé (see Chapter Three).

(Left) 'Inner sacred dance', nangcham (nang 'cham), *associated with a ritual of evocation of the great tutelary deities, performed by monks without masks inside the temple.*

tradition, it assumes the character of a 'hidden', semi-paradisiacal land which latter-day humans can only reach in visions or by supernatural means after being spiritually purified. Tazik, also known as Wölmo Lungring ('Ol mo lung ring), may thus be regarded as a counterpart to the Buddhist holy land of Shambhala.[12]

For the Bonpos, Tazik is the holy land of religion, being the land in which Tönpa Shenrap (sTon pa gShen rab, 'the Teacher Shenrap') was born in the royal family and in due course became enthroned as king. Tönpa Shenrap is believed to be a fully enlightened being, the true Buddha (the word 'Buddha' simply means 'the Enlightened One') of our world age. The Bonpos possess a voluminous hagiographical literature in which his exploits are extolled.[13] Without entering into details or discussing the many problems connected with the historical and literary genesis of this extraordinary figure, one may at least note that his biography is not, contrary to what has sometimes been claimed by Western scholars, closely related to that of Śākyamuni. Thus, during the greater part of his career, Tönpa Shenrap was the ruler of Tazik or Wölmo Lungring and hence a layman, and it was as such that he incessantly journeyed from his capital in all directions to propagate Bon. It is worth noting that this propagation also included the performance of innumerable rituals. These rituals, which are performed by Bonpos today, thus find their justification and legitimation in the exemplary exploits of Tönpa Shenrap. Contrary to Buddhism, where rituals generally have no direct canonical basis, in Bon, as pointed out by Philip Denwood, "we have whole developed rituals and their liturgies specified in the minutest detail in the basic canon".[14] The propagation of Bon by Tönpa Shenrap also included the construction of temples and stupas, but not the foundation of monasteries, which are not mentioned at all in his biography. Travelling far and wide and surrounded by his entourage he engaged in the conversion of notorious sinners. His numerous wives, sons, daughters and disciples also played significant roles in this soteriological activity, in a way for which there is no Buddhist parallel. It was only late in life that he was ordained, after which he retired to a forest hermitage, and it was only at this point in his career that he finally succeeded in converting his mighty opponent, the Prince of Demons.[15]

Certain parts of the biography of Tönpa Shenrap are clearly related to figures such as Padmasambhava, the eighth-century Indian yogin and magician who, according to the Buddhists, was invited to Tibet by the king and, subjugating the local gods and demons, founded Samyé (bSam yas), the first Buddhist monastery (c. 779). He may also be compared to Gesar, the hero of the great Tibetan epic who, like Tönpa Shenrap, conducts triumphant campaigns in all cardinal directions against the forces of evil. The historical and literary relationship between these various figures remains to be clarified, but it is at least certain that the entire cycle of biographical material relating to Tönpa Shenrap—whatever its relationship to historical fact—cannot be dismissed as simple plagiarization of Buddhist texts.

By the late eleventh century, the Bonpos had begun to establish monasteries organized along the same lines as those of the Buddhists, and several of these monasteries eventually developed into large institutions with hundreds of monks and novices. The most prestigious Bonpo monastery, founded in 1405, is Menri (sMan ri) in the Central Tibetan province of Tsang, north of the Brahmaputra (Tsangpo) river, but there are numerous other monasteries, especially in eastern and northeastern Tibet (Kham and Amdo). Monks are bound by strict rules of discipline, including celibacy. Fully ordained monks are called *drangsong* (*drang*





srong), a term that in Tibetan usually translates Sanskrit *ṛṣi*, the semi-divine 'seers' of the Vedas.[16] Over the centuries the monastic life of Bon has increasingly come under the influence of the tradition of academic learning and scholastic debate that characterizes the dominant Buddhist Gelugpa school, but the tradition of tantric yogins and hermits, living in organized communities or in solitude, has never been abandoned.

The Bonpos have a vast literature which Western scholars are only just beginning to explore. Formerly it was taken for granted in the West that this literature was nothing but an uninspired and shameless plagiarism of Buddhist texts. The last twenty-five years have, however, seen a radical change in the view of the Bon religion. This reassessment was initiated by David L. Snellgrove, who in 1967 made the just observation regarding Bonpo literature that "by far the greater part would seem to have been absorbed through learning and then retold, and this is not just plagiarism".[17]

Subsequently, other scholars have been able to show conclusively that in the case of several Bonpo texts which have obvious, even word-by-word Buddhist parallels, it is not, as was formerly taken for granted, the Bonpo text which reproduces a Buddhist original, but in fact the other way round: the Bonpo text has been copied by Buddhist authors.[18] This does not mean that Bon was never at some stage powerfully influenced by Buddhism; but once the two religions, Bon and Buddhism, were established as rival traditions in Tibet, their relationship, it is now realized, was a complicated one of mutual influence.

Monks playing shawms, gyaling (rgya gling), *outside a Bonpo monastery in eastern Tibet.*

The nature of the sacred texts of Bon can only be understood in the context of the Bonpo view of history. Bon tradition holds that the early kings of Tibet were adherents of Bon, and that consequently not only the royal dynasty but the entire realm prospered. This happy state of affairs came to a temporary halt during the reign of the eighth king, Drigum Tsenpo (Gri gum btsan po). This king persecuted Bon with the result that a large number of Bon texts were hidden away so that they might be preserved for future generations. For Bonpos, this was the beginning of the textual tradition consisting of 'treasures', *terma* (*gter ma*), i.e. concealed texts that have been rediscovered at an appropriate time by gifted individuals called 'treasure-revealers', *tertön* (*gter ston*).[19]

Although Bon was reinstated by Drigum Tsenpo's successor and flourished during the reigns of subsequent kings as it had done before, it was once more persecuted by king Trisong Detsen in the eighth century. This king is portrayed in mainstream Tibetan tradition as a devout Buddhist, thanks to whose patronage the first Tibetan monks were ordained. Bonpo sources maintain, however, that his motives for supporting Buddhism were, on the one hand, the selfish belief that he could thereby prolong his life, and, on the other hand, the argument put forward by certain evil individuals at his court that the Bonpo priests, already equal to the king in power, would certainly take over the whole government after his death.[20]

Ruins of the monastery of Yungdrung Lhading (g.Yung drung lha sding) *in one of the deep valleys of Gyarong in eastern Tibet. This monastery, one of the greatest of Bon in the eighteenth century, was destroyed by Chinese troops following the conquest of the principalities of Gyarong in 1775. It was rebuilt as a Buddhist (Gelugpa) establishment, but was once more destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Reconstruction was begun in the late 1980s, the site having been given back to the Bonpos.*

Whatever the truth—and leaving aside the question of whether "later historians have made two persecutions out of what was in fact only one"[21]—both Buddhist and Bonpos agree that during the reign of Trisong Detsen, the Bonpo priests were either banished from Tibet or compelled to conform to Buddhism. Once again Bon texts were concealed, to be rediscovered when the time was ripe for propagating Bon anew.





The greater part of this vast body of literature which the Bonpos regard as forming their canon of sacred scriptures belongs to the class of 'treasures', believed to have been hidden away during the successive persecutions of Bon and subsequently revealed by 'treasure-discoverers'. Bonpos also claim that many of their sacred scriptures were transformed by the Buddhists into Buddhist texts, thus reversing the accusation of plagiarism.

According to Bonpo historical texts, the final rediscovery of their sacred scriptures began early in the tenth century. The first discoveries are said to have been made by chance. Wandering beggars stealing a box from the monastery of Samyé in the belief that it contained gold and later exchanging the contents—which to their disappointment turned out to be only Bonpo books—for food, has an authentic ring; the same is true of an account of Buddhists looking for Buddhist texts, who, finding only Bonpo texts, simply gave them away.[22] Gradually, however, the textual discoveries came to be surrounded by supernatural signs and circumstances. Discoveries of texts were frequently preceded by initiatory preparations, often lasting several years and culminating in visions in which supernatural beings revealed the place where the 'treasure' was hidden. Often the 'treasure' is not a concrete book at all, but an inspired text arising spontaneously in the mind of the 'treasure-discoverer'; such a text is a 'mental treasure', *gongter* (*dgongs-gter*).[23]

The Bonpo monastery of Nangshig (sNang zhig) in Ngapa (rNga pa), northeastern Tibet, rebuilt in the 1980s after its complete destruction in the 1960s during the Cultural Revolution.

Those texts which were considered by the Bonpos to be derived, ultimately, from Tönpa Shenrap himself, were collected to form a canon. This vast collection of texts (the only edition available today consists of approximately 190 volumes) constitutes the Bonpo Kanjur (bKa' 'gyur), forming an obvious parallel to the Tibetan Buddhist canon, likewise called 'Kanjur'. While no precise date for the formation of the Bonpo Kanjur can be ascertained at present, it should be noted that it does not seem to contain texts which have come to light later than 1386. A reasonable surmise would be that the Bonpo Kanjur was assembled by 1450. The Bonpo Kanjur, which in turn only constitutes a fraction of the total literary output of the Bonpos, covers the full range of Tibetan religious culture; as far as Western scholarship is concerned, it still remains practically unexplored.[24]

A common division of the Bonpo Kanjur is the fourfold one into Sūtras (mDo), Prajñāpāramitā ('Bum), Tantras (rGyud) and texts dealing with the higher forms of meditation (mDzod, 'Treasure-house'). For the sake of convenience the Indian (Buddhist) terms are used here and elsewhere, but it must be kept in mind that although the Bonpos employ the same Tibetan terms as the Buddhists, they do not accept their Indian origin, since they trace their religious terminology to Zhangzhung.

Like the Buddhists, the Bonpos also have a vast collection of commentarial, philosophical and ritual texts known as the Tenjur (brTen 'gyur). The contents are divided into three basic categories: 'External', including commentaries on canonical texts dealing with monastic discipline, morality, metaphysics and the biographies of Tönpa Shenrap; 'Internal', comprising the commentaries on the Tantras including rituals focusing on the tantric deities and the cult of ḍākinīs, goddesses whose task it is to protect the Doctrine, and worldly rituals of magic and divination; and finally 'Secret', a section that deals with meditational practices.[25] For the present study of the iconography of Bon, textual material has been extracted from the Sutra and Tantra sections of the Kanjur, and from the 'External' and 'Internal' sections of the Tenjur.

Interior of the main temple in the course of reconstruction, Nangshig Monastery.

A significant genre within Bonpo literature is that of historiographical texts. The importance of this genre lies in the particular perspective on Tibetan history that it presents, a perspective which is radically different from Tibetan Buddhist texts. Thus, in Buddhist texts, the introduction of Buddhism in the seventh and eighth centuries under the patronage of successive Tibetan kings is regarded as a great blessing, pre-ordained by the Buddha Śākyamuni and carried out by saints and scholars from the holy land of India. Thanks to Buddhism, so the Buddhists maintain, Tibetans acquired a higher ethical code, the art of writing, the subtleties of philosophy and the possibility of reaching spiritual enlightenment—in other words, they became a civilized nation.

The picture is altogether different when we turn to Bonpo historical literature. The introduction of Buddhism into Tibet is described as a catastrophe. Writing in 1842, a Bonpo scholar, an abbot of Menri monastery, Nyima Tenzin, described the introduction of Buddhism as ultimately due to "the perverse prayer of a demon" and put into effect when the moment was ripe by "he who acted like a monk but retained the Five Poisons", i.e. the Buddhist saint Śāntarakṣita. The suppression of Bon is referred to as "the setting of the sun of the Doctrine", followed by the dissolution of the Tibetan state and the spread of moral and social anarchy.[26] On the other hand, conciliatory efforts have not been lacking; thus one source suggests that Tönpa Shenrap and the Buddha Śākyamuni were in reality cousins, and their doctrines, consequently, essentially identical.[27]

It is difficult to assess the number of Bonpos in Tibet. Certainly they are a significant minority. Particularly in eastern Tibet, as for example in the Sharkhog area north of Sungpan in Sichuan, whole districts are populated by Bonpos. Another important centre is the region of Gyarong where several petty kingdoms, fully independent of the Tibetan government in Lhasa as well as of the Chinese Emperor, provided generous patronage for local Bonpo monasteries until the greater part of the region was conquered in a series of devastating campaigns conducted by the imperial Chinese army in the eighteenth century.[28] Scattered communities of Bonpos are also to be found in central and western Tibet; of the ancient Zhangzhung kingdom, however, no trace remains, although Mount Kailash is an important place of pilgrimage for Bonpos as well as Buddhists. Another much-frequented place of pilgrimage, exclusively—as opposed to Mount Kailash —visited by Bonpos, is Mount Bönri (Bon ri), 'Mountain of Bon', in the southeastern district of Kongpo[29]. In the north of Nepal there are Bonpo villages, especially in the district of Dolpo. At a point in history which remains to be determined, Bon apparently exerted a strong influence on the Nakhi people in Yunnan Province in southwestern China;[30] with this exception, the Bonpos do not seem to have engaged in missionary enterprises. In India, Bonpos belonging to the Tibetan exile community have established (since 1968) a large and well-organized monastery in which traditional scholarship, rituals and sacred dances of Bon have been preserved and are carried out with great vigour.[31]

Introduction Notes

1 For a survey of the early history of Buddhism in Tibet, cf. Snellgrove and Richardson 1968: 66-143 and Snellgrove 1987: 381-526.

2 For an overview of Bon, cf. Kværne 1987b. There is no consensus as to the etymology of the word *bon;* the discussion is summed up in Snellgrove 1967: 2.

3 Bon has been described as an unorthodox form of Buddhism by Snellgrove 1967, Kværne 1972 and again by Snellgrove 1987.

4 I have emphasized this perspective in Kværne 1987b and Kværne 1990c.

5 Stein 1972: 191 ff.

6 This understanding of Bon has been consistently maintained by Helmut Hoffmann, cf. Hoffmann 1961.

7 Hoffmann 1961: 98. Fifteen years later, he still maintained this view in spite of a radical improvement in the availability of relevant sources, cf. Hoffmann 1975.

8 Especially Snellgrove 1967: 1-21 ("Introduction"). For a detailed study of a whole range of Buddhist polemical writings directed against Bon, cf. Martin 1991.

9 The relevant section of the historical work *Legs bshad mdzod,* written in 1929 but quoting a large number of older sources, has been translated by Karmay 1972.

10 On the question of Zhangzhung, cf. Karmay 1972: xxx and Tucci 1956: 71-75.

11 Cf. Haarh 1968 and Stein 1971a.

12 On Tazik and Wölmo Lungring, cf. Karmay 1972: xxviii and Coleman 1993: 13-16. On Shambhala, cf. Bernbaum 1980.

13 For an overview of this literature, cf. Kværne 1974. Cf. also Kværne 1986.

14 Denwood 1983: 13.

15 Kværne 1986: 73-74.

16 Snellgrove 1967: 10

17 *Ibid*: 12.

18 Blondeau 1971, especially pp. 45-47 and Karmay 1988: 216-223.

19 Karmay 1972.

20 Cf. the Bonpo historical work known as *Grags pa gling grags,* hitherto unpublished and known to exist in the form of two manuscripts only. I am preparing an edition and translation of this text for publication.

21 Karmay 1972: xxxiii.

22 Karmay 1972: 152.

23 For an overview of the traditions of Bonpo 'treasures', cf. Kværne 1974: 27-37.

24 Cf. Kværne 1974.

25 The Bonpo Tenjur is analysed in Kværne 1974: 114-144. Note that in the context of Bon, the spelling of Tenjur is *brten 'gyur,* 'that which is firm (*brten*)', hence implying the firmness of the doctrine.

26 Kværne 1971: 227.

27 Kværne 1989: 38.

28 On the Bonpo communities in Gyarong, see Mansier 1990, Karmay 1990 and Greatrex 1994.

29 Karmay 1992.

30 Jackson 1979. The Nakhi have a complex pantheon which at least to some extent is influenced by Bon and in some cases includes deities also found in Bon, cf. Rock 1952.

31 Kværne 1990c and Coleman 1993: 208-210.

CHAPTER ONE

The Peaceful Deities

As with Buddhism in Tibet, Bon distinguishes between 'peaceful' and 'wrathful' deities. Bon likewise makes a fundamental distinction between deities who are 'enlightened', and thus have transcended the round of birth and death, and deities who are 'of this world', and hence are not—or not yet—fully enlightened.

This distinction does not, however, correspond to a division into divine as contrasted to human beings. Men as well as women can attain enlightenment and thus pass beyond the limitations of the round of birth and death, just as transcendent, enlightened beings can manifest themselves in human form. In fact, sages who lived in Tibet, so the Bonpos believe, before the introduction of Buddhism, i.e. in the period during which Bon claims to have held undisputed sway, as well as lamas in later times, are regarded by followers of Bon as divine manifestations and are worshipped and portrayed as deities in ritual and iconographic contexts.

THE FOUR TRANSCENDENT LORDS (Plate 1)

The principal peaceful deities are a group of four known as the Four Transcendent Lords, Deshek Tsozhi (bDer gshegs gtso bzhi). This divine tetrad is headed by a goddess, 'the Mother', Yum (Yum), followed by three male deities, known as 'the God', Lha (Lha); 'the Procreator', Sipa (Srid pa), and 'the Teacher', Tönpa (sTon pa).[1] The Four Transcendent Lords are depicted on the carved book-cover reproduced on Plate 1.

In each successive world-age—the age when man lives, respectively, 100,000 years, 80,000 years, 60,000 years and so on down to ten years—the latter three manifest themselves under different names. In the present world-age, when man lives to the age of 100 years, they are Shenlha Wökar (gShen lha 'od dkar), the God; Sangpo Bumtri (Sangs po 'bum khri), the Procreator; and Shenrap Miwo (gShen rab mi bo), the Teacher. The Mother is Satrig Ersang (Sa trig er sangs).

An important source—interesting not least because of its obvious age—for the iconography of the Four Transcendent Lords, is a manuscript, preserved in Berlin, of the *Zermig* (*gZer mig*), the medium-length version in two volumes of the biography of Shenrap.[2] This manuscript contains no less than 65 miniatures, depicting the Four Transcendent Lords as well as members of the family and entourage of Shenrap, narrative scenes and, finally, portraits of the lay patrons who commissioned the manuscript. It gives an altogether archaic impression and could well date from the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

For each member of the Four Transcendent Lords, the *Zermig* invokes five different forms manifesting the five qualities of Body, Speech, Mind, Excellence and Power, each manifestation bearing an individual name and distinguished by

different colours.[3] The majority of these manifestations are portrayed among the miniatures of the Berlin manuscript. On Plate 9 are reproduced the five manifestations of the 'Procreator'.

These four deities are frequently portrayed on sets of four thangkas. Three thangkas from one set (Plates 4, 5 and 9), and two from a second set (Plates 3 and 8) are reproduced in this book. They are all of the same type, in which the main figure is surrounded by 252 miniature figures of the same deity, the complete set of four thangkas thus giving a total of 1008, corresponding to the number of Enlightened Beings in the present world-age.

Satrig Ersang (Plates 2 and 3)

The name of the 'Mother', Satrig Ersang (Sa trig er sangs), is in the language of Zhangzhung. The first two syllables, Satrig, signify 'Wisdom' (Tib. *shes rab*), while the following two syllables remain unexplained, although *sang* (*sangs*) in Tibetan means 'purified' and is the first element in *sangyé* (*sangs rgyas*), 'Buddha', a term which the Bonpos, too, use to designate Enlightened Beings.

Her name thus indicates her essential character, Wisdom. Just as the Buddhist goddess Prajñāpāramitā ('Perfection of Wisdom'), her colour is yellow. Her attributes are the 'Five Heroic Syllables', *pawo drunga* (*dpa' bo 'bru lnga*), SRUM, GAM, RAM, YAM, OM, set in a swastika, the symbol of eternity, which she holds in her right hand, and a mirror, which she holds in her left. Her throne is supported by lions.

Seated on a shining, white lotus:
The Great Mother, Satrig Ersang!
The colour of her body is like the essence of gold,
Her ornaments, attire and palace
Are adorned by pure, golden light.
In her right hand she grasps the Five Heroic Syllables,
In her left, she holds a shining mirror.
She sits on a seat supported by mighty lions addorsed.
To the Mother, from whom the Enlightened Ones
Of the past, present, and future come forth,
Majestic in her power to bless,
I, together with donors of generous gifts,
Present prostrations, praise and offerings
In order to remove the impurity of countless beings.[4]

Shenlha Wökar (Plate 4)

Shen (*gshen*) is an enigmatic word. In many contexts it seems to signify 'priest'; thus the historical texts of Bon, the earliest of which date from perhaps the twelfth century, relate that each of the ancient kings of Tibet was assisted by a minister and a *kushen* (*sku gshen*), 'personal priest'. Likewise, the Enlightened Teacher of the present age is known as Shenrap (gShen rab), 'the Supreme Priest'. The exact interpretation of Shenlha (gShen lha) is, however, uncertain. It could be understood as 'the God of the Priests', or as 'the God Who Is a Priest'. Wökar ('Od dkar) signifies 'White Light'.

The body of Shenlha Wökar is white; his hands rest in his lap in the position of meditation. His attribute is a hook held in his right hand, and his throne is supported by elephants.

The ontological status of Shenlha Wökar, often called the 'God of Wisdom', is that of *bönku* (*bon sku*), 'unconditioned being' or 'supreme being', literally 'Body of Bon' (thus corresponding exactly to the Buddhist category of *dharmakāya*). This status, as well as his association with light, makes it tempting to regard him as essentially a variant of the Buddha Amitābha of Mahāyāna Buddhism and perhaps even to suggest influences from the Manichaean religion. Such connections remain, however, to be substantiated.[5]

Seated on a shining, white lotus:
The Great God, Shenlha Wökar!
The colour of his body is like the essence of crystal,
His ornaments, attire and palace
Are adorned by crystal light.
In order to rescue sentient beings
From the morass of birth-and-death,
He grasps the hook of Compassion.
He sits on a seat supported by elephants addorsed.
To the God of Wisdom, the compassionate,
Majestic in his power of Compassion,
I, together with donors of generous gifts,
Present prostrations, praise and offerings
In order to remove the impurity of countless sentient beings.[6]

SANGPO BUMTRI (Plates 5, 6 and 7)

Sangpo Bumtri (Sangs po 'bum khri) is a deity who brings forth the beings inhabiting the world, and hence he is styled the 'Procreator', *sipa* (*srid pa*).[7] The first element of his name, Sangpo (Sangs po), is etymologically related to Tsangpa (Tshangs pa), the Tibetan rendering of the Hindu creator-god Brahmā. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Sangpo Bumtri is an authentic Tibetan deity. The second part of his name, Bumtri ('Bum khri), literally means 'Hundred Thousand, Ten Thousand', and is also found as the first part of the name of the Tibetan deity Bumtri Gyalpo ('Bum khri rgyal po).[8] Sangpo Bumtri plays an important role in ancient Tibetan cosmogonic myths, where he is identified with the demiurge Yemön Gyalpo (Ye smon rgyal po). In one such myth, his name is explained as follows: "Because he is enlightened (*sangs*) from the beginning of time and thus is the lord of the hundred thousand (*'bum*) (beings), he is given the name Sangpo Bumtri."[9] A different etymology states that he is accompanied by a hundred thousand male and ten thousand female 'procreators'.[10]

The colour of his body is white. One hand rests on his lap in the posture of meditation, while the other is raised, holding a banner. His throne is supported by garudas.[11]

His ontological status is that of *dzokku* (*rdzogs sku*), 'perfected being', corresponding to the Buddhist *sambhogakāya*.

Seated on a shining, red lotus:
The Procreator, Sangpo Bumtri!
The colour of his body is the essence of silver,
His ornaments, attire and palace
Are adorned by silver light.
In order to instruct in the eternal meaning of examples,
He grasps the invincible banner.
He sits on a seat supported by mighty garudas addorsed.
To the Subduer, through Skilful Means, of living beings,
Majestic in the power of his magic emanations,
I, together with donors of generous gifts,
Present prostrations, praise and offerings
In order to remove the impurity of countless sentient beings.[12]

Shenrap Miwo (Plates 8, 9 and 23)

Shenrap Miwo (gShen rab mi bo), 'Supreme Priest, Great Man'—also known as Tönpa Shenrap (sTon pa gShen rab), 'the Teacher Shenrap'—is the Teacher of Bon in the present cosmic period in the world of birth-and-death. His role in the Bon religion is similar to that of Śākyamuni in Buddhism, but his biography, as related in several texts of varying length, has little in common with that of Śākyamuni. Thus, the greater part of his career takes place while he is a prince, and later the king, of the land of Tazik (sTag gzig), situated, according to Bonpo tradition, to the west of Tibet. He propagates the doctrine not only by preaching, but also by performing rituals, and his numerous wives, offspring, and disciples play prominent roles in this connection (see Introduction).[13]

Tönpa Shenrap can be depicted in various ways, depending on the stage of his career (e.g. before or after his ordination to monkhood), and several of these forms will be dealt with separately below. When portrayed as the fourth member of the Four Transcendent Lords, however, the colour of his body is dark blue;[14] one hand touches the ground as a sign of his enlightenment, the other rests in the position of meditation on his lap. This aspect is thus parallel to that of Śākyamuṇi at the moment of his enlightenment, but in addition Shenrap holds a sceptre, called a *chakshing* (*phyag shing*), in his right hand; it is marked with a swastika, the symbol of Eternal Truth.

Seated on a shining, blue lotus:
The Teacher, Shenrap Miwo!
The colour of his body glitters like jewels,
His ornaments, attire and palace
Are adorned by jewel light.
In order to instruct those who are deluded by ignorance,
He holds a golden sceptre.
He sits on a seat supported by wheels of universal dominion.
To the Guide, through insight, of ignorant ones,
Majestic in his power of radiance,
I, together with donors of generous gifts,

Present prostrations, praise and offerings
In order to remove the impurity of countless sentient beings.[15]

A number of important deities are aspects or special manifestations of the Four Transcendent Lords. They are the object of particular ritual cycles and meditational practices. Their iconography, though distinct, is often related—especially with regard to colour—to the relevant member of the basic tetrad.

These deities will be dealt with in the same order as that of the Four Transcendent Lords.

Sherap Chamma (Plates 10 and 11)

Chamma (Byams ma), 'the Loving Lady', is the chief manifestation of Satrig Ersang. Her name derives from *cham* (*byams*), 'to love tenderly', to which is added the feminine suffix *ma*. Her name is thus the feminine form of Champa (Byams pa), the Buddhist bodhisattva Maitreya, with whom she otherwise does not seem to share any attributes. She is frequently called Sherap Chamma (Shes rab Byams ma), 'the Loving Lady of Wisdom'. Like several other deities (e.g. Mawé Sengé, the 'Lion of Speech', see p. 37) she can assume five-fold form; she can also, like the Buddhist female bodhisattva Tārā, appear in eight-fold form, each form banishing fear of a particular danger (Plate 11).

She is beautiful and richly adorned; like Satrig Ersang, her colour is yellow and her throne is supported by lions. Her attributes, however, are different: in her right hand she holds a golden vase, and in her left, a mirror.

On a throne supported by a lotus, the sun and the moon,
And eight agile lions of Wisdom:
The Loving Lady of Wisdom!
Her body glows with a reddish-yellow light,
On her head is a turquoise crest,
Her throat is adorned with a necklace,
A golden string of 108 beads.
On her right and left earrings
Turquoise beads are ranged on strings.
The upper part of her body, striking a dancing posture,
Is bathed in the crystal light of the sun and the moon.
All her bracelets and anklets
Are decorated by clusters of jewels.
She is adorned with beautiful, lustrous garments
And all the ornaments of a heavenly being.
In her right hand, level with her heart,
She graciously holds a golden vase;
In her left hand, level with her head,
She holds a magic mirror supported by a lotus.[16]

KÜNTU ZANGPO (Plate 12)

In the context of rituals, and especially in the meditational traditions of Bon, Küntu Zangpo (Kun tu bzang po), 'the All-Good', is regarded as the supreme deity, from whom all knowledge emanates. His position is thus very similar to that of Shenlha Wökar, both being regarded as personifications of the *bönku* (*bon sku*), literally 'Body of Bon', i.e. Ultimate Reality.

In death rituals he represents the Ultimate Reality; it is the goal of the ritual to unite the consciousness of the deceased with him.[17] In meditational traditions, he is the source of the lineage of the Aural Transmission of Zhangzhung, the Zhangzhung Nyengyü (Zhang zhung snyan rgyud), one of the three lineages of sages through which the teachings and practices of 'the Great Perfection', *dzokchen* (*rdzogs chen*), of Bon are transmitted.[18]

Küntu Zangpo is portrayed as a naked Enlightened Being, an image of the enlightened consciousness which likewise is 'naked', i.e. without discursive thought and devoid of mental obscurations such as hate, greed and ignorance. He is without attributes, both hands resting in his lap in the posture of meditation. His colour is usually white, but occasionally blue.

In Tibetan Buddhism, too, Küntu Zangpo (Sanskrit: Samantabhadra) is an important entity, especially in the Nyingmapa and the Kagyüpa traditions. In India, Samantabhadra was at the outset a bodhisattva, but in Tantric Buddhism he acquired the entirely different status of a personification of Ultimate Reality.[19] As such, in the Buddhist tradition his bodily colour is generally blue.

Küntu Zangpo has a number of manifestations, all of whom have different names and different attributes.

KÜNZANG AKOR (Plate 13)

Künzang Akor (Kun bzang a skor), 'the All-Good, Cycle of *A*', is a frequently represented form of Küntu Zangpo (abbreviated: Künzang). Like Küntu Zangpo, Künzang Akor is seated in the posture of meditation, both hands resting with the palms upwards on his lap; he is richly dressed and adorned with jewels.

On his breast is the Tibetan letter *A*, the syllable which forms part of his name. *A* is the final letter of the Tibetan alphabet, inherent in all the consonants; it is a phonetic symbol of Primeval or Absolute Reality. Thus, one of the traditions of the Great Perfection is known as Atri (A khrid), 'the instructions (*khrid*) regarding Primeval Reality (*A*)'.[20] *A* is a frequent element in meditational visualizations and in mantras, such as A AKAR SALE WÖ A YANG OM DU (*a a dkar sa le 'od a yang oṃ 'du*).[21]

The attributes which Künzang Akor holds in his hands can vary slightly. The figure reproduced on Plate 13 has a lotus on his right-hand side and a small vase on his left. More frequently the deity holds a swastika in his right hand and a vase in his left.

Künzang Gyalwa Düpa (Plates 14 and 15)

Künzang Gyalwa Düpa (Kun bzang rgyal ba 'dus pa), 'the All-Good, Assembly of Conquerors', is seated in the posture of meditation, crowned and adorned with jewels. More rarely his naked body is white and without ornaments. He has five faces and ten arms.

The following invocation, composed by the great scholar Sherap Gyaltsen (1356-1415), provides a description of this deity, his attributes and entourage:[22]

Küntu Zangpo Gyalwa Düpa —
His body shines like fire-crystal.
Of his five faces, the face in the centre is white,
That to the right is yellow, that to the left is green;
The face at the crown of his head is red,
That of his top-knot is deep blue.
Of his ten hands, the first pair is joined at the breast
In the gesture of mental equipoise;
On his right and left palms are the disks of the sun and the moon
On which are the syllables A *and* MA,
The symbols of Skilful Means and Wisdom.
To the right, the next three hands hold, from the top downwards,
Royal banner, swastika and wheel;
On the left, the three hands hold
Bow and arrow, noose and hook.
The last pair make the 'earth-touching' gesture of enlightenment.
His four legs rest in the cross-legged posture.
He is adorned with the thirteen ornaments of a peaceful deity —
Thus one should visualize him.

Again, emanating to the left and right,
From rays of light from the breast of the main deity —
To the right, the Loving Lady of Compassion, brilliant pale yellow,
To the left, the Goddess of the Sky, brilliant pale green.
They have one face, two arms,
And each holds a shining mirror.

Again, emanating from rays of light from the heart of the chief deity,
So as to form an outer circle,
(The Six Subduing Shen):
Yeshen Tsukpü, of white colour;
Chegyal Barti, of blue colour;
Sangwa Düpa, of deep-blue colour;
Tisang Rangzhi, of green colour;
Mucho Demdrug, of white colour;
Sangwa Ngangring, of bluish-red colour.
They all have one face, two arms,
And each holds a hook of Compassion.

One should also visualize the deity as surrounded by
The Blessed Ones of the Ten Directions,
The Spiritual Heroes of the Ten Stages,
And the host of Protectors who guard the Doctrine.

To the east is the Queen of Spring, yellow, holding a chain;
To the north, the Queen of Summer, blue, holding a shang *(flat-bell);*[23]
To the west, the Queen of Autumn, red, holding a noose;
To the south, the Queen of Winter, white, holding a hook.[24]

KÜNZANG GYALWA GYATSO (Plate 16)

The attributes which this deity holds in his ten hands show that he may be regarded, at least in iconographic terms, as an elaboration of Künzang Gyalwa Düpa. His standing posture, his thousand outstretched arms and multiple faces all combine to give a strong impression of relationship with the Buddhist deity Chenrezi (sPyan ras gzigs; Sanskrit: Avalokiteśvara). In the case of Gyalwa Gyatso, these heads are usually ranged five-five-one, but a variant, shown on Plate 17, has five-three-one-one-one.

The name Gyalwa Gyatso (rGyal ba rgya mtsho), 'Ocean of Conquerors', can be understood as referring to the limitless activity of his Compassion, symbolized by his thousand arms and multiple heads.

The following invocation is found in the sixth volume of the *Ziji* (*gZi brjid*), the extended (twelve-volume) version of the life of Tönpa Shenrap, believed to have been revealed as a mental inspiration to Loden Nyingpo (b. 1360):[25]

The Lord, the All-Good, Ocean of Conquerors —
The colour of his body is pure white like snow or a conch,
It is smooth and youthful.
His five main faces are white, yellow, red, green and blue,
According to the Five Families (of Enlightened Beings).
Above them are five faces of Perfection (of Enjoyment),
Like five spread-out mandalas of the Five Families.
Above them is the smiling red face of Magic Appearance.
Of the ten main hands, the first pair is joined at the breast
With the palms joined (in the gesture of adoration);
On the palms of his hands are the sun and the moon,
Marked with the syllables A *and* MA.
To the right, the next three hands hold
Royal banner, swastika and wheel;
On the left, the three hands clasp
Bow and arrow, noose and hook;
The last pair make the 'earth-touching' gesture of enlightenment.
Behind them are twenty hands of the Perfection of Enjoyment,
Making the gesture of meditation.
Behind them again are forty arms of Magic Appearance,
Making the gesture of threatening.

Behind them again are a thousand hands of Magic Appearance,
Making the gesture of universal dominion,
On the palms of which a thousand eyes appear—
The thousand Enlightened Ones of the Good Aeon,
Who have renounced their families and become monks.
The four feet trample underfoot
Birth, old age, sickness and death.
The twenty perfect toes
Shine on a thousand magic lotus petals.
His head-ornament and earrings,
Necklace and bracelets, finger-rings and so on,
Are decorated with various kinds of precious stones.
His upper and lower garments are of thinnest silk and cotton.
On the ten points of his body
The Ten Blessed Ones and their consorts dwell;
On the 'eight heaps',
The Eight Spiritual Heroes and their consorts;
Surrounding him on all four sides,
Are the Four Gate-keepers;
In the pores of his skin
Enlightened Ones and Spiritual Heroes dwell,
Too numerous for their bodies to be grasped by the mind
Or their names invoked.

To his right and left,
From two MA *syllables dissolving into light, appear*
On his right, the Loving Lady of Compassion,
Of white colour and holding a vase;
On his left, the Goddess of the Sky,
Of blue colour and holding a lotus.[26]

CHIMÉ TSUKPÜ (Plates 17 and 18)

The holy scriptures of Bon relate that before taking birth among humans on the continent of Dzambuling, the Enlightened One of the present world-age was born on the summit of Mount Sumeru in the paradise of the Thirty-three Gods. In that existence, he received the name of Chimé Tsukpü ('Chi med gtsug phud), 'Deathless One With the Hair-knot'. His supernatural birth from the divine lady Zangsa Ringtsün (bZang za ring btsun, see Chapter Four) is told as follows:[27]

Trülshen Nangden transformed himself into a cuckoo and alighted on the right shoulder of Zangsa Ringtsün who was staying by the shore of a lake. As a result a son was born, so she said,

O son born to a mother whose body has known no man,
O tender shoot who has sprouted without seed!
Stay in this place which is like a precious fan!

Digging in the golden sand of the shore of the lake, she built a jewel hut and placed the child in it. When nine days had passed, light was shining, so the mother went to look at her son. The son recognized his mother and smiled, his face radiating light, and on the crest of his head a lotus flower with three crowns, one on top of the other, appeared. The mother was amazed at this, and said,

O son of the Supreme God of Primal Existence,
You have an eternal body which knows neither birth nor death,
Emitting the light of the Five Immutable Wisdoms.
You are the lamp illuminating darkness,
The protector of living beings.
Although you were left for nine days you did not die,
And an udumbara *flower appeared on the crest of your head —*
Hence I give you the name 'Deathless One With the Hair-knot'.

Chimé Tsukpü is venerated as the divine transmitter of the teachings of the Tantras which he received from the god Shenlha Wökar. Transforming himself into a turquoise cuckoo, he flew up to the heavenly sphere of Womin ('Og min, Sanskrit: Akaniṣṭha), where he entreated Shenlha Wökar to proclaim Bon. Filling the universe with light from his body and causing the universe to quake and tremble, Shenlha Wökar proclaimed the Doctrine in the form of Tantra in 16,000 chapters. Having firmly retained the teachings in his mind, the divine youth Chimé Tsukpü again transformed himself into a cuckoo and returned to his mother who received the teachings from him. Later, he transmitted the Tantras as well as part of the teachings of the Great Perfection to Sangwa Düpa (gSang ba 'dus pa, see Chapter Four). He also transmitted the teachings concerning the deity Purpa (Phur pa) to Takla Mebar (sTag la me 'bar, see Chapter Four).

Chimé Tsukpü wears the princely ornaments of a Spiritual Hero. The colour of his body is white, and between his hands, resting in the position of meditation, he holds a wish-fulfilling gem.

Nampar Gyalwa (Plates 19, 20 and 21)

The doctrine of Eternal Bon was proclaimed by Tönpa Shenrap as he repeatedly sallied forth from his capital to rescue kings and princes from evil rebirths or to enable them to successfully carry out pious tasks. It was in connection with such an episode that he manifested himself as Nampar Gyalwa (rNam par rgyal ba), 'the Fully Victorious One'. The story of this manifestation is found in chapter thirteen of the *Zermig* as well as in volume eleven of the *Ziji*. Below is a summary of the account as found in the *Ziji*.[28]

In the land of Göjé Gya (rGod rje rgya) a prince is born; because thirty magic letters appear on his body, he is called Kongtsé (Kong tse), 'Having Magic Letters of Power', and later he became known as 'the Magic King Kongtsé'.[29] As an act of piety, the prince decides to build a temple in the middle of a lake; as this task is impossible to accomplish for ordinary humans, he scrutinizes the magic letters in his hand and realizes that in a former life he was allied to a hundred demons, *sinpo* (*srin po*). He accordingly travels to the land of demons; they promise to help him, but only on condition that he keeps their aid secret.

The demons lay the foundation of the temple. Kongtsé's wife, however, discovers the reason for her husband's long absence. She comes to the lake, whereupon the demons, released from their promise, abandon the site. Kongtsé now travels to the border between the land of gods and the land of demons; here he receives the prophecy that the *cha* (*phya*) deity Kengtsé Lenmé (Keng tse lan med) will complete the construction.[30]

Together with a thousand artisans, Kengtsé Lenmé proceeds to the capital, Wölmo Lungring ('Ol mo lung ring), where Shenrap instructs him in how to construct the temple. Flying through the air and surrounded by a thousand master artisans, Kengtsé Lenmé arrives at the lake and the construction of the temple is completed. It is given the name Karnag Trasel (dKar nag khra gsal), 'Brilliantly White-and-Black Spotted'. Because Kongtsé had broken the vow of secrecy, an army of demons now returns and tears down the temple, except for the foundations. A monster, resting on the bottom of the lake, awakes, and rising to the surface, is on the point of swallowing the foundations as well. On seeing this, Kongtsé is terrified; he turns towards the sky and utters a pitiful cry. The cry is heard by Shenrap, who immediately appears, surrounded by his entourage of Spiritual Heroes. Entering the temple which appears again as if by magic, he emits rays of light in all directions, and transforming himself into Nampar Gyalwa, the Fully Victorious One, the subduer of demons, he emanates four fierce deities. The latter terrify the army of demons, who flee back to the land of darkness; the king of demons is converted and transformed into a young god who becomes the guardian of the temple.

Nampar Gyalwa, accordingly, is Tönpa Shenrap in his aspect of the invincible subduer of demons and, in general, the remover of hindrances. Iconographically, he is easy to recognize, as his right hand is raised with the palm turned upwards in the gesture of vanquishing; his left hand rests on his knee. He is seated in a cross-legged posture. His body is said to shine with a multi-coloured radiance, and he has the fierce smile signifying power.[31]

He is surrounded by four bluish-black fierce deities, each having nine heads, eighteen arms and four legs.[32] The heads are those of garuda, lion, dragon, *makara* (aquatic monster), tiger, leopard, yak and snake; in the centre is the head of a fierce deity. In each hand the deity holds a weapon: arrow, spear, axe, sword, sabre, hammer, gimlet, saw, razor, disk, mass of fire, boiling water, 'killing sword', 'cutting sword',[33] *kamali*,[34] 'rectangular stone', chain and thunderbolt.

Tritsug Gyalwa (Plate 22)

In contrast to the Buddha Śākyamuni, Tönpa Shenrap to a large extent accomplishes his task of propagating the Doctrine while he is prince and later king of Wölmo Lungring, in other words, while he is a layman. Finally, however, he does receive full ordination as a monk, and as such establishes the tradition of monastic discipline within Bon.

At his ordination he receives the name of Tritsug Gyalwa (Khri gtsug rgyal ba). Iconographically he is represented with the robes and attributes of a *drangsong* (*drang srong*), a fully ordained monk, holding the five objects which a monk is allowed to possess: staff, razor, needle, pitcher and bowl, and wearing the six items of dress: upper robe, lower robe, cloak, 'lotus hat' and 'lotus boots' (the latter counts

as two items).[35] He is usually shown surrounded by his chief disciples, the Four Excellent Youths.[36]

After his ordination, Shenrap leads a life of severe asceticism for three years, and it is through the power of his asceticism that he is finally able to convert Khyappa Laring (Khyab pa lag ring), the king of demons. Asceticism is thus an ideal in the Bonpo tradition established by Tönpa Shenrap himself.

Other Forms of Tönpa Shenrap (Plate 23)

Tönpa Shenrap is often shown in the dress of a monk, his right hand touching the earth in the gesture of enlightenment. In this form, he does not wear a 'lotus hat' and is iconographically indistinguishable from the Buddha Śākyamuni.[37]

The Berlin manuscript of the *Zermig* has several unusual representations of Tönpa Shenrap, of which three are shown on Plate 23, p. 71.

The following peaceful deities play an important role in many Bonpo rituals and are also frequently encountered in religious art.

The Six Subduing Shen

The Six Subduing Shen, Dülwé Shendrug ('Dul ba'i gshen drug), are the deities who rescue sentient beings from the six realms of existence within the round of birth-and-death. In general appearance and function they clearly correspond to the Buddhist Avalokiteśvara manifesting himself in the six realms of existence. The Six Subduing Shen are regarded in Bon as emanations from six points of the body of Shenrap.[38] They have already been mentioned in the invocation translated above (p. 30); their colours (and sometimes also their names) can vary slightly (below Sangwa Düpa is yellow, and not, as has been seen above, blue).

They are usually shown standing, holding their respective attributes and wearing the crown and other ornaments of a Spiritual Hero. They may also be seated, however, with or without ornaments.[39] They are most frequently represented as follows:[40]

Hell:	**colour**	**attribute**
Sangwa Ngangring (gSang ba ngang ring)	bluish-red	banner
Tormented spirits:		
Mucho Demdrug (Mu cho ldem drug)	white	nectar-bag
Animals:		
Tisang Rangshi (Ti sangs rang zhi)	green	book
Humans:		
Sangwa Düpa (gSang ba 'dus pa)	yellow	drum and *shang*
Demi-gods:		
Chegyal Barti (lCe rgyal bar ti)	blue	sword
Gods:		
Yeshen Tsukpü (Ye gshen gtsug phud)	white	lute and book

The Thirteen Primeval Shen

The Thirteen Primeval Shen are regarded as Spiritual Heroes who inhabit 'the region of clear light of intermediate space'. Each presides over one of the thirteen stages of the progress of a Spiritual Hero. In funerary rituals they preside over the intermediate state between death and rebirth (*bar do*). They are not regarded as emanations of Tönpa Shenrap, but are intimately associated with him; thus, according to the *Zermig*, they formed part of his entourage at the moment of his birth.

They are shown standing, holding weapons, musical instruments, or objects related to birds (feathers etc.) as their attributes (cf. Plate 5).[41]

The Twelve Rituals

'The Twelve Rituals', Choga Chunyi (Cho ga bcu gnyis), is the collective term for a group of twelve deities that figure prominently in the *Ziji*. In this twelve-volume compendium there is a major ritual text devoted to each of these twelve deities,[42] and iconographically they are often represented in sets of twelve thangkas. Some of them also have a well-established cult in their own right. All except one, Namjom, manifest themselves in the peaceful mode, and all except one, Gyalwa Gyatso, have one face and two arms (cf. p. 31). All are seated in a cross-legged posture, except Namjom and Gyalwa Gyatso, who are standing.

		colour	attribute	throne supported by
1	Künying (Kun dbyings)	blue	banner	lions
2	Genyen (dGe bsnyen)	white	banner and *A*	lions
3	Jamden (Byams ldan)	white	right hand: equipoise; left hand: enlightenment	elephants
4	Dükhor (Dus 'khor)[43]	turquoise	right hand: *chakshing*; left hand: wheel	wheels
5	Künrig (Kun rig)	white	banner	lions
6	Gyalwa Gyatso (rGyal ba rgya mthsho, cf. p. 31)			
7	Namjom (rNam 'joms)	bluish-grey	*vajra* [44]	(standing, no throne)
8	Menlha (sMan lha)[45]	blue	right hand: *chakshing*; left hand: medicinal nut	elephants

	colour	attribute	throne supported by
9 Namdag (rNam dag)[46]	yellow	right hand: mirror; left hand: vase	lions
10 Chamma (Byams ma, cf. p. 28)			
11 Mönlam Thayé (sMon lam mtha' yas)	red	right hand: red lotus; left hand: vase with nectar	lions
12 Dülchog ('Dul chog), identical with Tritsug Gyalwa (cf. p. 34)			

Mawé Sengé

Mawé Sengé (sMra ba'i seng ge), 'the Lion of Speech', is the divine bestower of eloquence, worshipped especially by the monastic community in order to obtain proficiency in scholastic debate. The name of this deity is the Tibetan counterpart to Sanskrit Vādisiṃha, a common epithet of Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of eloquence and learning, and iconographically the Bonpo Mawé Sengé is hardly distinguishable from the Buddhist Mañjuśrī. He is seated in a cross-legged posture, holding in his right hand a sword and in his left, the stem of a lotus supporting a book. He is often represented in five-fold form.[47]



Plate 1
The Four Transcendent Lords
Joachim Baader — Schoettle Ostasiatica,
Galerie für tibetische Kunst, Munich
55.5 x 17 cm.

This sumptuously carved and painted book-cover shows the Four Transcendent Lords according to their normal sequence, from left to right: the 'Mother', Satrig Ersang; the supreme God of Wisdom, Shenlha Wökar; the Procreator, Sangpo Bumtri; and the Teacher, Tönpa Shenrap. Each figure can be readily recognized by his or her characteristic attribute.

Plate 2 (*right*)
Satrig Ersang
V. d. W. Collection
Height: 20.6 cm.

The goddess is represented with her attributes, the Five Heroic Syllables and a mirror, held in her right and left hands respectively. The attributes are supported by lotuses. Her throne is supported by lions. At the base of the throne is the following inscription: "Homage to the Great Mother of Unbounded Space, Satrig Ersang".[48]



Plate 3

Satrig Ersang

R. Waldschmidt Collection
82.5 x 64 cm.

The thangka is one of a set of four. Another thangka from the same set, portraying Shenrap, is reproduced on Plate 8. The goddess holds her usual attributes, the Five Heroic Syllables in her right hand and a mirror in her left. The 252 miniature figures of the goddess forming the background are without attributes but their hands make the same gesture as the main deity, except the first four figures of the bottom row, whose hands rest in the position of meditation. Each of the thangkas, forming a set of four depicting the Four Transcendent Lords, has a similar fierce deity in the same position; these four fierce deities are 'the Fource Penetrating Wrathful Ones', Welgyi Trowo Zhi (dBal gyi Khro bo bzhi) emanated by Shenrap, see p. 34. (cf. plates 4, 5, 8 and 9).



Plate 4

Shenlha Wökar

R.E.E. Collection

81 x 63 cm.

(also in Auboyer and Béguin 1977: Plate 203, text p.186; and Lauf 1972: Plate 47)

The thangka seems to belong to the same set of four as the thangkas reproduced on Plates 5 and 8. The main figure is set against a background of 252 miniature figures of which the first five to the left in the bottom row have attributes (banner, lute, sword, flat-bell, book) which strongly resemble those of the Six Subduing Shen. The back of the thangka is inscribed with a long series of mantras, at the end of which is found the following prayer:

> *May there be good fortune in the country in which this icon dwells,*
> *May there be great blessing in that fortunate region,*
> *May disease afflicting men and cattle be averted,*
> *May rain fall at the right time,*
> *May the crops and livestock always be good,*
> *May there at all times be good fortune and happiness.*[49]



Plate 5

Sangpo Bumtri

Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich
82 x 63.5 cm.
(also in Lauf 1969: Plate 50, p.22-24; Lommel 1974: Plate 131; and Lauf 1979: Plate 87, text p.190)

The thangka seems to belong to the same set as those of Plates 4 and 8. Like the other two, a standing figure can be seen below the deity, and a fierce deity with nine heads and eighteen arms is found in the centre of the bottom row. Counting from the left, the first eleven figures of that row can be identified by their attributes as the first eleven of the Thirteen Primeval Shen (cf. p. 36).



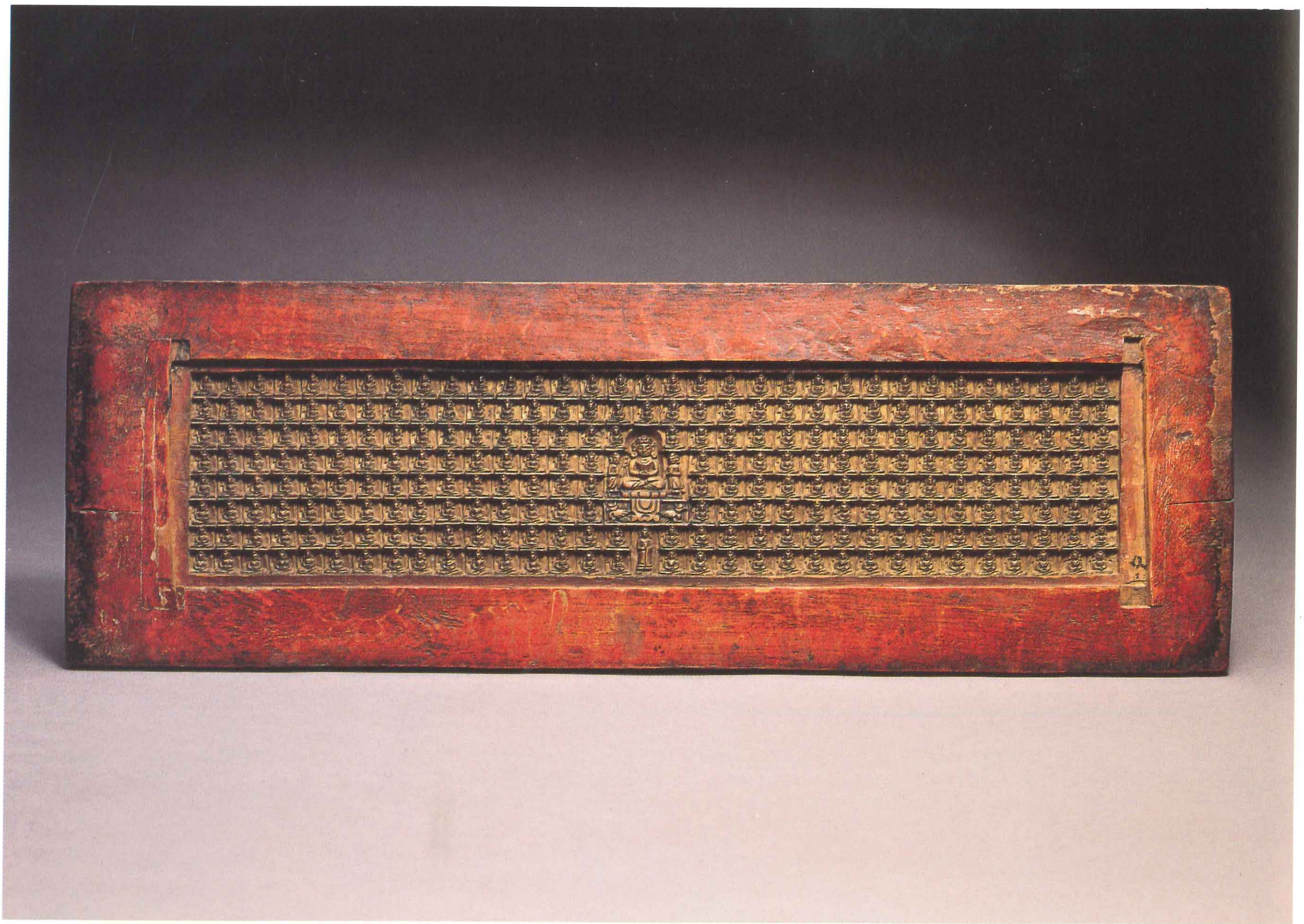


Plate 6
Sangpo Bumtri
Joachim Baader — Schoettle Ostasiatica,
Galerie für tibetische Kunst, Munich
64 x 21 cm.

The banner that the central figure of this carved book-cover holds in his right hand and the two garudas which support his throne identify him as Sangpo Bumtri. He is flanked by two standing figures and a third figure is standing beneath the throne. The remaining space is filled with 252 miniature figures of the deity.



1



2



3



4



5

Plate 7. 1-5

Sangpo Bumtri

Zermig ms., Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin, Orientabteilung

The miniatures portraying the five manifestations of the 'Procreator' Sangpo Bumtri are among the 65 miniatures in the Berlin manuscript.[50] The names of the five manifestations and the inscriptions accompanying the miniatures are as follows:

1 Yesang Karpo (Srid pa Ye sangs dkar po) (fol.25a).
2 Yedel Mutri (Srid pa Sangs po 'bum khri'i gsung las sprul pa'i khro bo Ye bdal mu khri, "The fierce deity Yedel Mutri, the emanation of the speech of the Procreator Sangpo Bumtri") (fol. 275a).
3 Karjé Chöpa (Kar rje phyod pa) (fol. 199a).
4 Shezhin Tangpo (Srid pa Shes bzhin thang po) (fol. 93).
5 Trülto Longtangjé (Srid pa 'Phrul to glong thang rje) (fol. 247a).

Yedel Mutri (7.2) is not described in the *Zermig* as being a fierce manifestation. It should also be noted that instead of the banner, the usual attribute of the Procreator, in the present miniature this deity holds what seems to be a hook.

Plate 8

Tönpa Shenrap

R. Waldschmidt Collection

82.5 x 64 cm.

This thangka belongs to the same set as that portraying Satrig Ersang (Plate 3). In the bottom left-hand corner is seen a lama in ornate robes, assisted by two monks, one of whom holds a parasol—a symbol of high dignity—over the head of the lama, while the other monk covers his mouth with a corner of his robe. In front of the lama is a table with various offerings. Presumably the scene shows the ritual consecration of the set of thangkas.

As in the other thangkas of this type, all the miniature figures make the same gesture except one figure to the right of the consecration scene, who seems to hold two attributes, possibly a staff or banner and a mirror. Immediately above the main figure is a deity of yellow colour holding a vase and a mirror, identifying her as the goddess Chamma, cf. Plate 10.



Plate 9

Tönpa Shenrap

V. d. W. Collection

87 x 67 cm.

This thangka, portraying Tönpa Shenrap, also shows a group of lamas in the bottom left-hand corner, presumably the monks who performed the consecration of the entire set of four thangkas. To their left are two laymen and a laywoman, who, we may assume, commissioned the thangkas and patronized their consecration. To the right of the bowl filled with offerings (jewels and elephants' tusks) is a yellow deity; his attributes—a jewel and a mongoose—identify him as Jambhala, the god of riches.

The thangka is of extraordinary interest as the names of the three lamas are written below the corresponding figures. Thus, from left to right, we read: Khyungpo Yungdrung Gyaltsen, Khyungpo *drangsong*[51] Yeshé Tsültrim and Yangtön[52] Rinchen Lhündrup.[53] The third monk is perhaps the same Rinchen Lhündrup who, according to the *Yangel Dungrap* (*Ya ngal gdung rabs*), the 'Genealogy' of the Yangel or Yang clan (which, at least from the twelfth century, lived in Dolpo in northwestern Nepal), received the religious name of Rinchen Gyaltsen.[54] D.L. Snellgrove convincingly argues that Rinchen Gyaltsen lived about 400 years ago.[55] Thus, on historical grounds, one may venture to date this thangka to the sixteenth century, and to assume that it was painted by local artists in Dolpo.

On the back of the thangka is an inscription which (following a somewhat shorter series of mantras) is identical with that on the back of the thangka reproduced on Plate 4, except for the last sentence which reads: "May all sentient beings possess perfect happiness!"[56]



Plate 10

Sherap Chamma

Steven R. Krolik Collection

20.6 cm.

This bronze of Sherap Chamma, Loving Lady of Wisdom, conforms exactly to the iconographic description in the invocation translated on p. 28. At the back of the throne is an inscription which reads: "Homage to the Great Mother, the Loving Lady of Wisdom".[57] Below the inscription are two addorsed lions.



Plate 11

Sherap Chamma

Block print from Tibet[57]

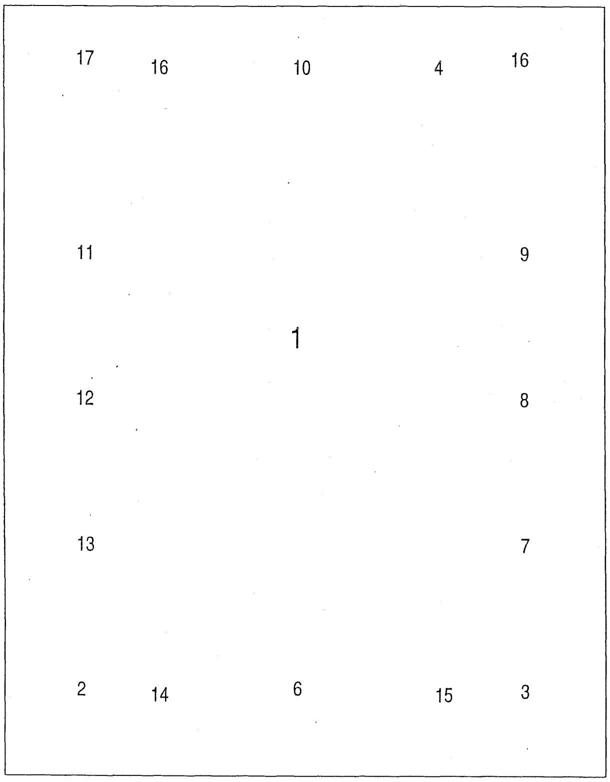


Fig.1

The central figure is Sherap Chamma, seated cross-legged on a lotus throne supported by lions, richly adorned with jewels and a crown, and holding her characteristic attributes: in her right hand, a vase, and in her left, a lotus supporting a mirror. The block print contains the following sets of deities, cf. Fig.1:

1-5 The Five Loving Ladies (Byams ma rigs lnga)
1 Centre, Loving Lady of Wisdom (Shes rab byams ma).
2 East, Blissful Liberation of Skilful Means (Thabs chen bde sgrol).
3 North, Holder of the Treasury of the Sky (Nam mkha'i mdzod 'dzin).
4 West, Loving Lady of Compassion (Thugs rje byams ma).
5 South, All-famous of the World of Appearance (sNang srid kun grags).

6-13 The Protectors Against the Eight Dreads ('Jigs pa brgyad skyobs)
6 The Protector Against Dread of Enemies.
7 The Protector Against Dread of Magic (*byad*).
8 The Protector Against Dread of Families.
9 The Protector Against Dread of *lu* (*klu*).[59]
10 The Protector Against Dread of Heretics.
11 The Protector Against Dread of Harm.
12 The Protector Against Dread of Death.
13 The Protector Against Dread of Planets.

14-17 The Four Gate-keepers (sGo srung bzhi)
14 The Goddess Holding a Hook (Lha mo lcags kyu ma).
15 The Goddess Holding a *shang* (Lha mo gshang thogs ma).
16 The Red Lady Holding an Iron Chain (dMar mo lcags sgrogs ma).
17 The Black Lady Holding a Noose (Nag mo zhags thogs ma).
This group of four is also known as the Goddesses of the Four Seasons, cf. p. 31.

There is a clear parallel between Chamma in her eightfold aspect of protectress against dangers and the Buddhist goddess Tārā 'Who Takes Care of the Eight Fears'.[60] Various lists of 'fears' are known. "A 1095 A.D. Indian inscription gives the eight fears as "lion, elephant, fire, snake, thief, fetters, ocean and demons"".[61]



Plate 12

Küntu Zangpo

R.E.E. Collection

63 x 52 cm.

The central figure is Küntu Zangpo, the personification of Absolute Reality, which is identical with the mind of the adept of higher meditational practices. He is seated in the posture of meditation, and his aspect is that of a naked Enlightened Being. The colour of his body is white; his throne is supported by lions.

Except for the two figures to the extreme right, all the monks in the bottom row wear the white elongated hat which is the characteristic mark of the practitioner of *dzogchen*, the 'Great Perfection'; its purpose is to shade the face of the adept while meditating in daylight. The background consists of eleven rows of seated figures, representing the lineage lamas of the Drenpa Akar Gongdü cycle. The top row begins at the left with a white Tibetan letter *A*. In the bottom row is seen, to the left, a monk seated beside an altar or table on which are ranged a vase containing flowers and a stand with precious objects (jewels, coral and two rhinoceros horns), followed by two figures (a layman and a laywoman?) who seem to strike postures of dance, and, finally, a group of six monks. The mantra on the reverse of the thangka indicates that Küntu Zangpo in this case is a divine form of the eighth-century sage Drenpa Namkha (see Chapter Four) in his function as chief divinity of the Drenpa Akar Gongdü (Dran pa Adkar dgongs 'dus) cycle.

On the reverse of the thangka is the following inscription:[62] "*a akar sale wö a yang om du* (twice); *a om hum Gyerpung Drenpa Mula*[63] *nyelo yo hum du*. For the sake of the gracious Mother, six thangkas depicting mandalas were made, and as 'support' for (i.e. image of) the Father, a (statue) of Künzang with five faces and ten arms.[64] From the depths of a sincere, pure mind, the donor, the *khendrung* Yungdrung Gyalpo,[65] led his kind parents (to release from birth and death?). They (i.e. these objects) were given for the sake of all sentient beings in the Three Realms—a great blessing! May it be auspicious!" The introductory mantra is that of Drenpa Namkha in his divine form.





Plate 13
Künzang Akor
Alessandri Collection
Height: 15 cm.
Photo: NODO, Como (Italy)
(also in Lo Bue 1991: Plate 62, text p.81)

Künzang Akor has the characteristic *A* on his breast and the attributes of lotus (right) and vase (left).



Plate 14
Künzang Gyalwa Düpa
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco
Height: 33 cm.

This statue of Künzang Gyalwa Düpa exactly corresponds to the description in the invocation (p.30) by Sherap Gyaltsen (1356-1415), including the two syllables *A* and *MA*. The throne is supported in front by (from left to right) an elephant, a lion and a horse; on the left-hand side (not visible), a dragon, and on the right, a garuda.

Plate 15

Künzang Gyalwa Düpa

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Gift of the Kronos Collections
97 x 75 cm.

This thangka portraying Künzang Gyalwa Düpa should be compared with the invocation by Sherap Gyaltsen (1356-1415). The main figure holds the symbols of the sun and the moon on the upturned palms of his hands in front of his breast, but they are not inscribed with the syllables *A* and *MA*. The significance of the two symbols is, however, the same as that of the syllables. The throne is supported (from left to right) by a dragon, an elephant, a lion, a horse and a garuda. The two standing figures to the right and left of the main figure might be Chamma and the Goddess of the Sky. The Six Subduing Shen (see p. 35), seated in the posture of meditation and wearing crown, jewels and richly embroidered robes, can be identified by the hook which each holds. They are situated to the immediate left and right of the heads of the main deity. Likewise, the Goddesses of the Four Seasons can be identified by their attributes: to the left, above the swastika held by the main deity, is the Queen of Summer, holding a *shang*; below the standing figure to the left is the Queen of Autumn, holding a noose (hardly discernible); below the corresponding figure to the right is the Queen of Winter, holding a hook (likewise effaced); and above the third left hand of the main figure is the Queen of Spring, holding a chain (cf. p. 31). A large figure in the centre of the bottom row is an unidentified, white deity, perhaps a form of Küntu Zangpo, flanked to the right by a deity riding a lion, probably Machen Pomra (rMa chen Pom ra), the divine protector of the Doctrine of Bon residing on the mountain bearing the same name in Amdo (northeastern Tibet). There are two unidentified fierce deities in union with their consorts in the second row of figures. The remainder of the thangka is filled by 63 lamas of the lineage of transmission of Künzang Gyalwa Düpa's cult.



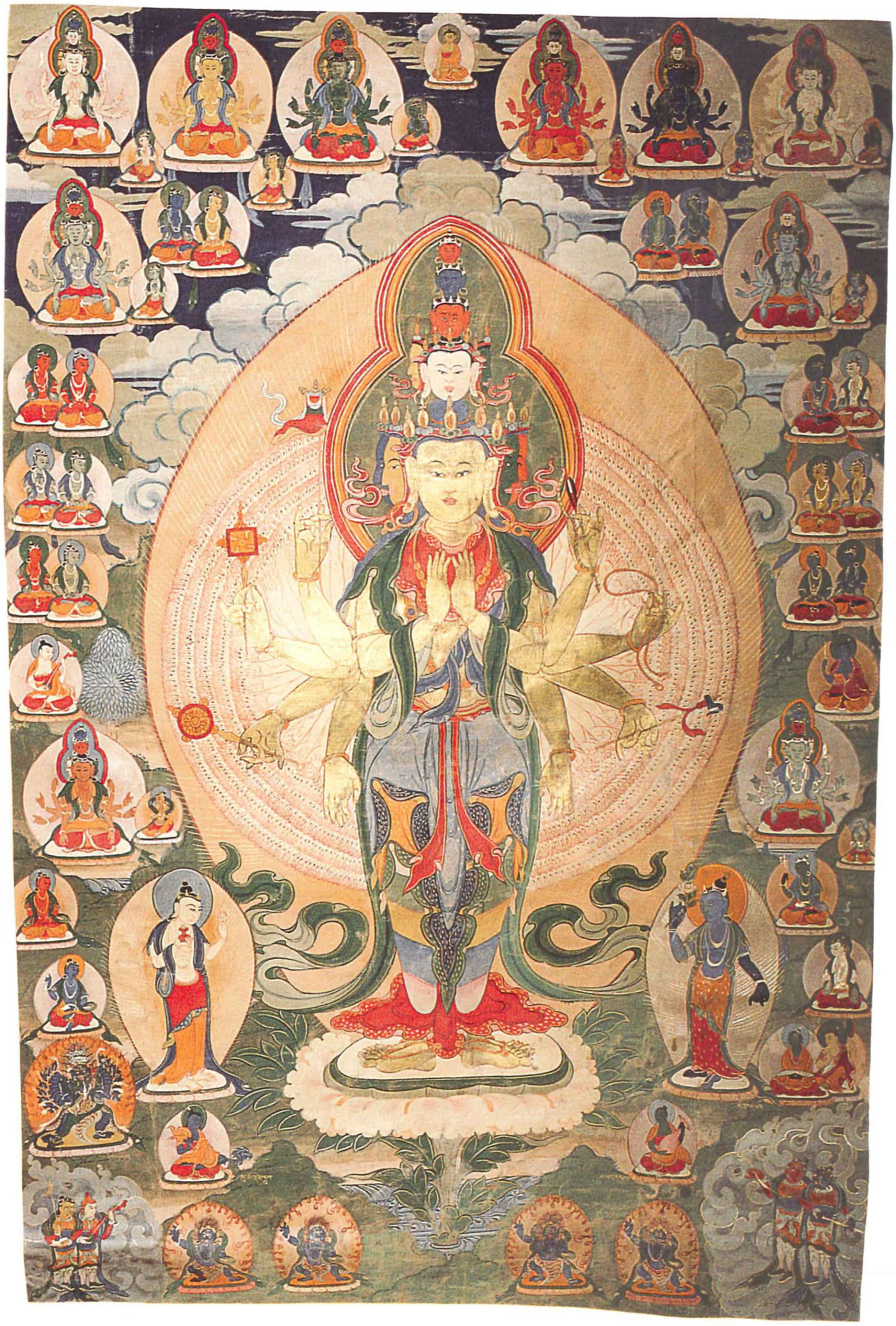


Plate 16

Künzang Gyalwa Gyatso

Tibet

Photo: Michael Henss

The presentation of Künzang Gyalwa Gyatso corresponds to that of the invocation of the *Ziji*, except for the arrangement of the heads which is five-three-one-one-one instead of the usual five-five-one, as in the invocation. The two goddesses are portrayed as in the invocation, the Loving Lady, Chamma, to the left holding a vase, and the Goddess of the Sky to the right holding a lotus. The entourage of the main deity consists of ten different manifestations of Gyalwa Düpa, with a kneeling figure in a posture of adoration in front of each. In the centre of the top row is a small figure of Tönpa Shenrap, dressed as a monk and in the posture of enlightenment. Along the left and right borders of the lower half are the Six Subduing Shen (see page 35). On the lower left-hand side there is also a fierce deity with eighteen arms. In the bottom row can be seen the Four Kings of the Quarters,[66] two in either corner, flanking four fierce deities.



Plate 17
Shenlha Wökar
Tibet
Photo: Per Kværne

The central figure is identified by an inscription as Shenlha Wökar, the deity who is the source of the lineage of teachings of 'the Threefold Propagation', Trakpa Korsum (bsGrags pa skor gsum), i.e. the propagation of the Great Perfection, Dzokchen (rDzogs chen), in the Land of Gods above, the Land of Men in the middle and the Land of *Nāgas* below. It is this lineage which is shown on the thangka. From Shenlha Wökar the lineage passes to the Five Enlightened Ones (lit. 'Conquerors') of the Five Classes, Gyalwa Rikṅga (rGyal ba rigs lnga), depicted on the left-hand side of the upper row. Five tutelary deities are seen to the right, with a blue Küntu Zangpo in the middle. The figures to be seen on the following six rows are the various *siddhas* and lamas through whom the Threefold Propagation was transmitted. On the right-hand side of the second row are seen, from the left, Yongsu Takpa (Yongs su dag pa), Milü Samlek (Mi lus bsam legs) and Yeshé Nyingpo (Ye shes snying po), the teachers of the Threefold

Plate 17 cont.

Propagation among gods, men and *nāgas* respectively. Below them is a row of four *siddhas* seated in caves: Tonggyung Tuchen (sTong rgyung mthu chen), holding a 'bomb', *tso* (*btso*), Shari Wuchen (Sha ri dbu chen), Chetsa Kharbu (lCe tsha mkhar bu) and Gyimtsa Machung (Gyim tsha rma chung). The first three are said to be scholars of Zhangzhung, Tibet and Menyag (i.e. Si-hsia or Tangut) respectively.

In the second row on the left-hand side are seen, from the left, Chimé Tsukpü, Chimé Wöden ('Chi med 'od ldan) and Trülshen Nangden ('Phrul gshen snang ldan). The figure below Chimé Wöden is Sangwa Düpa (see Chapter Four).

In the centre of the thangka, between the main figure and the *siddha* seated holding the staff and surrounded by *ḍākinis* and *siddhas*, are ranged the Six Subduing Shen, in two groups of three. The *siddha* is Lishu Taring who played a crucial role in disseminating the Threefold Propagation in Tibet in the eighth century.

For further details, see Chapter Four where this section of the thangka is reproduced as Plate 46.

In the bottom left-hand corner a monk is seated inside a temple with a table on which are placed offerings in front of him. He is only identified as 'the root-lama', i.e. a lama who is regarded by his disciples as a manifestation of an enlightened being. In the right-hand corner the protective goddess Sipé Gyalmo, 'Queen of the Created World', appears in threefold form: the White Sigyal (above), the Dark-brown Sigyal (below, left) and the Black Sigyal (below, right).

Plate 18

Chimé Tsukpü

R.E.E. Collection

86 x 66 cm.

Chimé Tsukpü is seated in meditation, his hands resting palms upwards on his lap; in his hands he holds a wish-fulfilling gem. The colour of his body is white; he is richly adorned with the princely jewels and dress of a Spiritual Hero. The background of the thangka is filled with figures representing the lineage of transmission of the Tantras, which were revealed to humans by Chimé Tsukpü.

Below the central figure is a tutelary deity with seven heads (five-one-one) and sixteen arms, in union with his consort; this deity is the *yidam* Magyü (see Chapter Two).





Plate 19

Nampar Gyalwa

Joachim Baader — Schoettle Ostasiatica,
Galerie für tibetische Kunst, Munich
55.5 x 17 cm.

The central figure of this book-cover is Nampar Gyalwa, his right hand raised in the characteristic gesture of this deity. He is flanked by the four fierce deities which he emanates in order to subdue the host of demons. The two pairs of peaceful deities to the right and left are the Four Transcendent Lords, viz. upper left, Satrig Ersang; upper right, Shenlha Wökar; lower left, Sangpo Bumtri; lower right, Tönpa Shenrap. Their attributes and thrones are as described above (pp. 25-28).

Plate 20 (*right*)

Nampar Gyalwa

Tibet
Photo: Tenzin Wangyal

With its oversized head and somewhat awkward posture, this bronze of Nampar Gyalwa nevertheless radiates the concentrated power of Shenrap, subduer of demons. The right hand is raised in the gesture characteristic of Nampar Gyalwa. The statue has been set on a more recent lotus petal base.



Plate 21

Nampar Gyalwa

R.E.E. Collection

78 x 62 cm.

In the centre of the thangka is Nampar Gyalwa, seated in a cross-legged posture, with his right hand raised to the level of his ear and the left hand resting on the throne. The throne is supported by two horses. Surrounding the main figure, in exact accordance with the description in the *Zermig*,[67] are the following figures, from the top downwards: a garuda devouring two *makaras*; two dragons, each devouring a *nāga*-child; two lions, each devouring a brahmin. In the four directions four fierce deities, with nine heads and eighteen arms, stand guard. Between each pair of fierce deities, on the left and right-hand side, are four seated figures; these are probably the Four Excellent Youths, who are the intimate disciples of Shenrap.[68]

In the bottom left and right-hand corners are two *nāgas*, accompanied by entourages of *nāgas*. In the bottom centre is a red figure which is either a fierce deity, or the king of demons, surrounded by four attendant demons with animal heads, striking grotesque dancing postures.

Above this figure can be seen the figure of a prince, wearing a white turban, facing, to the right, a female figure; presumably these are Kongtsé and his wife. They are accompanied by smaller figures which are either their children or their entourage. To the left of Kongtsé is a seated, unidentified figure wearing helmet and armour; in the corresponding position to the right is another unidentified figure. Finally, in the upper right and left-hand corners, and immediately below the lower fierce deities, are four figures dressed in the loose robes of Spiritual Heroes; each seems to be preaching to a group of similarly attired attendants.

Above the garuda in the upper centre of the thangka are four deities seated in a cross-legged posture inside golden haloes. These are the deities of the mandala of Yungdrung Longyé (g.Yung drung klong rgyas) which Tönpa Shenrap constructs when consecrating the temple, thus fulfilling Kongtsé's wish (see p. 34).[69]





Plate 22
Tritsug Gyalwa
Tibet
Photo: Tenzin Wangyal

Tönpa Shenrap is seated cross-legged; his right hand, which holds a sceptre, *chakshing*, touches the ground, while his left hand, which rests on his lap, supports the alms-bowl. He is dressed in the robes of a fully ordained monk, including the characteristic 'lotus hat', *pesha* (*pad zhva*). His throne is supported by lions; in front of the throne is a table with various offerings. He is surrounded by four standing figures, likewise dressed as fully ordained monks; they hold alms-bowls and staffs, *höru* (*hos ru*), and can be identified as the Four Excellent Youths.[70] The thangka has been painted in Tibet in recent years.







Plate 23. 1-3

Tönpa Shenrap

Zermig ms., Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin, Orientabteilung

23.1 (fol. 43b) *above* Shenrap is seated cross-legged; the colour of his body is dark blue, and apart from a red loin-cloth and red bracelets and anklets, his body is unadorned. He wears heavy earrings and a high, crown-like hat; his long hair falls down to his neck and shoulders. In his hand he holds a sceptre, *chakshing*, which is, however, more elaborate than the usual version (normally consisting of two swastikas connected by a handle). Here the sceptre consists, from below upwards, of a diamond-shaped dagger-blade, a swastika, two symbols of the moon, a second swastika, a square on which are drawn the symbols of the four continents (triangle, semi-circle, square and circle), and four symbols of the sun. Clearly the sceptre is an image of the universe and serves to emphasize the universal dominion of Tönpa Shenrap.
23.2 (fol. 200a) *above right* Iconographically, this representation of Tönpa Shenrap is unusual: he is dressed as a monk, but in blue robes; his body is red. The right hand holds an unidentified, curved object; his left hand rests on his lap in the gesture of meditation.
23.3 (fol. 93 a) *right* Tönpa Shenrap is shown as an ascetic, of dark green bodily colour, both hands resting on his lap in the gesture of meditation. He wears a white loin-cloth, white bracelets and anklets, white ornaments on his upper arms, red earrings, and a white and red band or crown. His long hair falls to his shoulders.

Chapter 1 Notes

1 The Four Transcendent Lords are described briefly by Hoffmann 1943: 16-17; 1967: 90-92; Snellgrove 1961: 47 (the deities he describes have slightly irregular attributes); Karmay 1975b: 196-197; Kværne 1985a: 22-23.

2 For a description of the manuscript, cf. Schuh 1981: 89.

3 It has been suggested (Hoffmann 1961: 103) that these pentads may reflect Manichaean influences, but it must be emphasized that there is no evidence for this theory.

4 This stanza, as well as the three stanzas that follow, is translated from an invocation of the Four Transcendent Lords in the *Zermig* (*gZer mig*), the medium-length version of the biography of Tönpa Shenrap, Delhi 1966 edition, vol.II fol.162b-164a (pp.867-870), cf. also *ibid*. pp.831-834. A slightly abridged translation of these stanzas was published by Hoffmann 1961: 102-103.

5 The question of possible Iranian elements in Tibetan religion is discussed in Kværne 1987a.

6 See note 4 above.

7 For an analysis of the wide semantic field covered by the Tibetan verb *srid pa*, see Stein 1973.

8 Hoffmann 1950: 156 quoting A.H. Francke, *Tibetische Hochzeitslieder*, Darmstadt 1923: 5.

9 Karmay 1986: 109 and 130-131. This etymology does not explain the syllable *khri*, unless it is to be understood (wrongly) as an error for *khrid*, 'to lead'. Cf. also Stein 1972: 194.

10 Kværne 1986: 72.

11 I use the more familiar Indian word garuda for the Tibetan *khyung*. The mythical bird *khyung* is, however, an indigenous Tibetan concept, originally quite independent of the Indian garuda, with which it was later identified. For a discussion of the *khyung*, cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 256-258.

12 See note 4 above.

13 For an overview of the three versions of his biography, see Kværne 1974: 98-99 and Karmay 1977: 2-4. A summary of the contents of the *Zermig* is found in Hoffmann 1961: 85-96, and a detailed summary of the biographical parts of the twelve-volume *Ziji* (*gZi brjid*) in Kværne 1986.

14 The colour of his body on the thangkas reproduced on Plates 8 and 9 is in fact green, probably due to discolouring caused by age.

15 See note 4 above.

16 Invocation forming part of the compilation *Kun gsal Byams ma chen mo mdo sngags sgrub pa* ('Invocations of the All-Radiant, Great Chamma (Drawn from) Sūtras and Tantras'), compiled by Nyima Tenzin (b.1813), one of the greatest Bonpo scholars of the nineteenth century; published in Delhi, 1966.

17 Kværne 1985a: 25.

18 On the Great Perfection of Bon, cf. Kværne 1973, Orofino 1985, Karmay 1988: 201-205 and Namdak 1993.

19 Cf. Karmay 1988: 46 and Kværne 1985a: 23.

20 On Atri, cf. Kværne 1973 and Kværne 1983.

21 Sacred formulas play the same crucial role in religious practice in Bon as in Buddhism in Tibet.

22 From *Dbal gsas las rim gyi sgrub pa dan las tshogs bcas. A collection of bonpo ritual texts for the propitiation of the tutelary Dbal-gsas*, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Ochghat 1973. Text no.14: *Zhi ba kun bzang a gsal 'phrul gyi lde mig gi phyag bzhes*, pp.83-116. Composed by Sherap Gyaltsen (Shes rab rgyal mtshan, 1356-1415), pp.106-108.

23 The flat-bell, *shang* (*gshang*), is used by Bonpos instead of the *drilbu* (*dril bu*; Sanskrit *ghaṇṭā*). On the *shang*, cf. Helffer 1994: 215-231.

24 The sequence implies the Bonpo manner of circumambulation, i.e. turning towards the left.

25 *Ziji*, vol. CHA, ch.26, fol.41a-42b.

26 It may be noted that in the case of the preceding invocation of the deity Künzang Gyalwa Düpa, the two goddesses are yellow and green respectively.

27 *Legs bshad rin po che'i gter mdzod*, Beijing 1985 edition (Mi rigs dpe skrun khang), p.77; summary Karmay 1972: xxi.

28 *Ziji*, vol. DA, ch.50; summary and references (with illustrations) in Kværne 1986: 69-72. *Zermig* ch.13, brief summary in Hoffmann 1961: 91-92. See also Karmay 1975a: Plates II and III.

29 Kongtsé is a rendering of the Chinese K'ung Fu-tzu (Confucius); his scholarliness is expressed through the thirty letters adorning his body. The name of his kingdom contains the word Gya (rGya) which implies 'China' (rGya nag).

30 On the *cha* (*phya*) deities, cf. Karmay 1975a:576 and Karmay 1986:86-88. The episode of Kongtsé's encounter with Kengtsé Lenmé is a version of a widespread literary motif, cf. Karmay 1975a.

31 *Zermig*: 774; *Ziji*, vol. DA, ch.50, fol.50a.

32 The four deities are listed as follows in *Ziji* vol. DA, ch.50, fol.52a: east, Zo bo dbu dgu; north, Ze ma dbu dgu; west, Ru co sde dgu; south, Rum po dbu dgu.

33 'Killing sword' and 'cutting sword' are only tentative translations of *bsgyur ba'i ya lad* and *gcod pa'i ya lad*. Dictionaries usually give 'armour' or 'armour and helmet' (*go cha dang rmog*) for *ya lad*, but *Bonpo Dictionary*: 128 explains *ya lad* as *ral gri*, 'sword'.

34 I have been unable to find an explanation of *ka ma li*.

35 The six items of dress are described in Snellgrove 1967: 157-159, illustrations pp.269-273.

36 The Four Excellent Youths, Tsenden Khye'u Zhi (mTshan ldan khye'u bzhi), are Yikyi Khye'uchung (Yid kyi khye'u chung), Yulo (g.Yu lo), Malo (rMa lo) and Tobu Bumsang (gTo bu 'bum sangs).

37 Kværne 1986: 37 (Fig.1).

38 Described in the *Ziji*, vol. CA, ch. 22, fol. 2a ff., see Kværne 1986: 50.

39 Kværne 1986: 51 (Fig. 18).

40 See plates 15, 16 and 17. For a table showing attributes etc. as described in three different sources, see Kværne 1985a: 21 (Fig. 3). In the *Zermig*, vol. KA, fol. 45a-b, more elaborately, in the *Ziji*, vol. CA, ch. 22, fol. 18b ff., there is a different version in

which the names and attributes are as follows:

	colour	attribute
HELL:		
Ngardrag Jampa		
(Ngar drag byams pa)	bluish-red	banner
TORMENTED SPIRITS:		
Drangdzin Jinpung		
(Grang 'dzin byin spungs)	reddish-green	nectar-bag
ANIMALS:		
Tingsel Hekyi Drönma		
(Ting gsal had kyi sgron ma)	blue	lamp
HUMANS:		
Drajin Dönpung		
(Gra byin don spungs)	yellow	jewel
DEMI-GODS:		
Musang Chebar		
(Mu sangs lce 'bar)	green	(not indicated)
GODS:		
Künshé Selbar		
(Kun shes gsal 'bar)	white	wheel

41 For the full list, see Kværne 1985a: 20-22.

42 For a list of the chapters of the *Ziji*, see Snellgrove 1967:5-8. On the Twelve Rituals, cf. also Denwood 1983.

43 Dükhor, 'Wheel of Time', corresponds to the Buddhist Kālacakra.

44 Note that Namjom, 'the Completely Victorious One', holds the *vajra* as his attribute, an object which otherwise is regarded as specifically Buddhist. He thus corresponds closely to the Buddhist Vajrapaṇi.

45 Menlha, 'God of Medicine', corresponds to the Buddhist 'Medicine Buddha'.

46 Namdag, 'the Perfectly Pure One', is identical with Chamma, but her attributes—mirror and vase—have switched sides.

47 cf. Kværne 1988.

48 "dbying gi (*sic*) yum chen mo Sa tri (*sic*) er sangs kyi sku la na mo". For the spelling *Sa tri*, cf. *Sa tri er sangs* in *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*, quoted by Hoffmann 1950: 334.

49 "sku brten 'di bzhugs pa'i yul phyags (*read* phyogs) su bkra shis sa phyogs su byin che mi nad dang phyug nad gyis rgyun chad/ char chu dus su 'babs/ lo bcu (*read* phyug) rtag du legs/ dus rnams kun du bkra shis dang bde legs kyis thob par gyur cig/".

50 A brief description of the various pentads associated with the Four Transcendent Lords is given in Hoffmann 1967: 87-92.

51 *Drang srong* (which in Tibetan Buddhist texts translates Sanskrit *ṛṣi*) designates the fully ordained monk in the Bon religion, corresponding to the Buddhist *gelong* (*dge slong*; Sanskrit *bhikṣu*), cf. Snellgrove 1967: 10. Khyung po is a district, still a stronghold of Bon, northeast of Lhasa.

52 'The Teacher of (the) Yang (clan)'.

53 "Khyung po g.Yung drung rgyal mtshan la na mo/ Khyung po drang srong Ye shes tshul khrims la na mo/ Yang ston Rin chen lhun grub la na mo/".

54 Ramble 1984: 363.

55 Snellgrove 1967: 4.

56 "sems can thams cad la bde skyid phun sum tshogs pa'i bskal pa dang ldan par gyur cig/".

57 "yum chen mo She (*sic*) rab byams ma nam (*sic*) mo/".

58 This xylographic print is reproduced in *Bonpo Bulletin* 1988. No size is given.

59 The *lu* (*klu*) are supernatural beings associated with springs and the subterranean world. Buddhists identify the *lu* with the Indian *nāga*.

60 Martin 1994: 55. See also Beyer 1973: 229-230.

61 Martin ibid.

62 "a a dkar sa le 'od a yang oṃ 'du/ (*twice*) a oṃ hūṃ Gyer spungs Dran pa mu la nye lo yo hūṃ 'du/ drin can yum gyi don du dkyil thang drug yab kyi rten du Kun bzang zhal lnga phyag bcu pa cig bzhengs/ lhag bsam rnam par dag pa'i thugs dkyil nas/ sbyin pa'i bdag po mkhan drung g.Yung drung rgyal pos drin can pha mas thog drangs khams gsum sems can thams cad kyi don du bzhengs byin rlabs che/ bkra shis par shog/".

63 *Mu la* is the Zhangzhung word for *nam kha'*, 'sky'; hence the reference is to Gyerpung Drenpa Namkha, see Chapter Four.

64 The 'Mother' (*yum*) is presumably Chamma. "Künzang with five faces and ten arms" is surely Künzang Gyalwa Düpa, on whom see p. 30.

65 This person cannot be identified, although the title *mkhan drung* indicates that he must have been a high-ranking monk. I have not found the word in available dictionaries, but if it is synonymous with *mkhan po*, 'abbot', he could perhaps be identical with the eleventh abbot of Menri monastery, Yungdrung Gyaltsen, enthroned in 1642 (in which case we would have a dating of the thangka).

66 Snellgrove 1967: 103 gives the names of the Four Guardians of the Quarters: east, Shel dkar 'od; north, Nam mkha'i snang; west, 'Od dkar 'dzin; south, Bon bdag.

67 *Zermig*: 777 (Delhi edition).

68 See note 36 above.

69 Cf. Kværne 1986: 72.

70 See note 36 above.

CHAPTER TWO

Tutelary Deities

The 'enlightened' deities of Bon can be divided into those who apppear in a peaceful mode and those whose manifestation is wrathful, *trowo* (*khro bo*). Chief among the latter are the great tutelary deities, *yidam* (*yi dam*), around whom the main ritual and meditational practices of the Tantras revolve. One or several Tantras are generally devoted to a particular *yidam*, and with each *yidam* are associated a host of attendant beings.

The iconography of the tutelary deities of Bon conforms to the basic conventions of the same class of deities in Buddhism, such as Cakrasaṃvara, Yamāntaka or Hevajra. In their typical manifestation, they appear as awe-inspiring figures with several fiercely distorted faces, their numerous arms wielding irresistible weapons. They are enveloped by flames, wear ornaments made from human bones and trample the enemies of Bon underfoot. Most of these deities are embraced by a consort of a similarly fierce aspect (although usually portrayed with fewer faces, hands and legs). The divine couple is known as the 'Father' and 'Mother' (*yab* and *yum*) respectively. On taking a closer look at each individual *yidam*, however, one soon realizes that there is no question of simple identity with Buddhist counterparts. The tutelary deities of Bon have their specific and unique iconography, detailed in the invocations and visualizations of the Bonpo Tantras and other ritual texts. As in Buddhism, however, the iconography of a *yidam* is regarded as consisting of symbolic elements so that to meditate on such a deity is to comprehend the whole of reality and thus obtain enlightenment.

MAGYÜ SANGCHOG TARTUG (Plate 24)

The Tantras of Bon are divided into 'Father Tantras', *pagyü* (*pha rgyud*), and 'Mother Tantras', *magyü* (*ma rgyud*). The chief deity of the 'Mother Tantras' is Magyü Sangchog Tartug (Ma rgyud gsang mchog thar thug), 'Supreme Secret of Mother Tantras, Attaining the Limit', often referred to simply as Magyü. He is portrayed standing in the characteristic posture of a *yidam*, his left legs bent and his right legs outstretched. He has sixteen arms, each of which holds a skull-bowl containing blood and a fresh heart; he has seven heads, arranged five-one-one: the first five are, from the left, blue, yellow, dark blue, white and green, while the upper heads are red and white. The colour of his body is dark blue, and behind his body are two raised and outspread wings. He is embraced by his consort Kyema Marmo (Kye ma dmar mo), 'Red Kyema', whose body, as her name indicates, is red. The cult of the Mother Tantras is believed by Bonpos to have been transmitted to humans by Zangsa Ringtsün (see Chapter Four).[1]

The 'Father Tantras' focus on five deities collectively known as the 'Five Supreme Ones of the Divine Shrine', Sekhar Chonga (gSas mkhar mchog lnga):[2]

1. Welsé Ngampa (dBal gsas rngam pa), the fierce god of Body (*sku*)
2. Lhagö Togpa (Lha rgod thog pa), the fierce god of Speech (*gsung*)
3. Trowo Tsochog Khagying (Khro bo gtso mchog mkha' 'gying), the fierce god of Mind (*thugs*)
4. Purpa (Phur pa), the fierce god of Action (*phrin las*)
5. Welchen Gekhö (dBal chen ge khod), the fierce god of Good Quality (*yon tan*)

Of these, Welsé Ngampa, Trowo Tsochog Khagying and Welchen Gekhö will be presented below. Welchen Gekhö is closely associated with the *yidam* Meri (Me ri), who is likewise discussed below. Lhagö Togpa is not worshipped to any great extent, but is important as the male consort of the goddess Sipé Gyalmo (see Chapter Three). Purpa is a personification of the ritual dagger, the *purpa*; the cult of Purpa, though important, will not be discussed in this study.[3]

Trowo Tsochog Khagying (Plates 25 and 26)

A *yidam* of the greatest importance in the Tantric literature and ritual traditions of the Bonpos is Trowo Tsochog Khagying (Khro bo gtso mchog mkha' 'gying), 'Wrathful One, Supreme Lord Towering in the Sky'. He has three heads and six arms, his body is dark blue, and he is embraced by his consort, Khala Dugmo (mKha' la gdug mo), 'Furious Lady in the Sky', whose body is red.

The invocation translated below is from a text discovered as a textual Treasure, *terma* (*gter ma*), by the 'treasure-discoverer', *tertön* (*gter ston*), Shenchen Luga (gShen chen Klu dga', 996-1035) in 1017:[4]

BSVO! In the central realm of Highest Truth,
In the blazing shrine of the Wrathful One,
Causing furious cries of HALA and CHA to resound,
Is the blazing Wrathful One, the Supreme Lord,
the God Towering in the Sky.
His majestic form, furious utterly beyond endurance,
Has three faces, six arms, one leg extended
and the other one drawn in.

BSVO! The right face is shining white,
The left face is lustrous red,
The middle face is bluish black.
His dark brown hair twists upwards,
He utterly overpowers the Three Worlds with his splendour.
He leads the universe upwards,
He presses the nine doors of hell downwards.
He wears crystal ornaments of wind,
He has put on the lower garment of flashing lightning,
He is adorned with the insignia of a hero, a demon's flayed skin,
His girdle is a serpent, bound round his waist.

On the upper part of his body is a demon's hide,
On the lower part, a tiger's tattered skin.
Of his six hands, in the upper right hand
He clasps the banner of victory—
With it he overcomes the demons and their hosts.
Next, he brandishes the sword of Wisdom
which cuts off discursive thought—
With it he cuts off inimical and obstructing demons—
birth and death—at the very root.
Next, he clasps the thunderbolt-axe of meteoric iron—
With it he cleaves the obstructing enemies from head to toe.
Of his six hands, in the upper left hand
He clasps an arrow and a bow, the weapons of the visible world—
With them he strikes the demons in the very centre of their hearts.
Next, he extends the magic lasso of skilful Means—
With it he rescues (sentient beings) from the pit of birth-and-death.
Next, he clasps the magic hook of Compassion—
With it he rescues (sentient beings) from the quagmire of hell.[5]

Spreading his fingers,
He hurls magic weapons[6] *at enemies and demons.*
Raising his great face towards the sky,
He consumes the country of the ogres with its inhabitants as his food.
The eight great gods adorn his head,
The eight great nāgas are pressed down under his feet,
The eight great planets are set in motion by his hand,
The four great kings are sent forth as his messengers.
The lion, elephant, horse, dragon and garuda,
The male and female gods and demons are spread out as his seat.

When the Great One surges forth from the Void,
Causing vengeful cries of HALA! *and of* CHA! *to resound,*
The whole entourage chants:
"Arise, arise, from the Void arise!
Come forth, come forth, from your place come forth!
If you harm, you may harm even a god,
If you are wrathful, there is neither near nor far.
There is nothing which you do not subdue:
Those who destroy the Doctrine of Bon,
Those who revile the rank of priests,
Those who destroy the wealth of the holders of drums,
Those who break their solemn vows,
Malicious enemies who create hindrances—
Without compassion towards them,
Subdue them utterly and grind them to dust!
Drive them far away and quickly 'liberate'[7] *them!*

BSVO! As for the great Mother inseparably united in embrace—
From the mind which has the nature of the tranquil sky,
The marks of the fury of an irresistible thunderbolt arise:
The Furious Lady in the Sky, the matrix, Mother of all!
Shining in splendour with the red colour of power,
Her bluish-black hair piled up like clouds cleaving the sky,
Her eyes flash upwards like two great, irresistible stars,
Her eyebrows move like rainbows in the space of heaven,
From her nostrils whirls the black apocalyptic storm,
In her mouth Compassion spreads a turquoise mist,
From her ears thunders the dreadful sound of a dragon's roar.
The marks of glory—sun, moon, planets, stars—adorn her limbs.
With her right hand she hurls
The great golden thunderbolt at the enemy;
With her left, she offers a heart
To the mouth of the Father.

Trowo Tsochog Khagying has a complex entourage. The thangka reproduced on Plate 26 shows the entire entourage of this deity (cf. Fig. 2), which to a large extent is also part of the entourage of Welsé Ngampa as represented on Plates 27 and 28.

WELSÉ NGAMPA (Plates 27, 28 and 29)

Welsé Ngampa (dBal gsas rngam pa) is widely worshipped. His name, 'Fierce (rNgam pa) Piercing Deity (dBal gsas)', indicates his nature, which is one of overwhelming power and irresistible ferocity.[8]

He has nine heads: the bottom three are, from right to left, white, red and blue; the middle three, those of tiger, lion and leopard; the top three, those of dragon, garuda and *makara* (aquatic monster). In his eighteen arms, he grasps different weapons with which he destroys inimical and obstacle-creating demons. The colour of his body is blue. He is embraced by his dark-green consort, the 'Lady of Boundless Space'.

His body is bluish-black, emitting the jewel light of beryl;
His right face is white, his left face red,
The face in the middle is bluish-black.
His right face is that of the Father, supreme Means;
His left face is that of the Mother, highest Wisdom;
The face in the middle is the perfection of Father and Mother.
The ornament crowning the dark blue head in the middle
Is the fierce head of an all-devouring lion.
The ornament crowning the white head to the right
Is the spotted, fierce head of a great leopard.
As for the crown at the very top,
It is the fierce head of an all-devouring, mighty garuda.
As for the crown of the tiger's head,

It is the fierce head of a mighty dragon, king of sound.
As for the crown of the leopard's head,
It is the fierce head of a nimbly leaping makara.
The nine fierce heads subdue even the mighty.
The reddish-yellow hair twists upwards,
Reducing divine priests to subjection.

Of his eighteen hands, the foremost pair
Holds a sharply pointed dagger which strikes the Five Poisons[9]*—*
With it he dries up the sea of birth-and-death from the very bottom.
To the right, the topmost of his eight hands
Holds the victorious banner of knowledge—
With it he vanquishes the army of demons.
Next, he brandishes the sword which cuts off discursive thought—
With it he cuts off inimical and obstructing demons—
birth and death—at the very root.
Next, he holds a broad axe[10]*—*
With it he cleaves the demons from head to toe.
Next flutters the ensign[11] *of the created world—*
With it he subdues the host of wisdom-gods.
Next, he holds a straight and long spear—
With it he pierces the inner pride of the mind of (imagined) wisdom.
Next, he holds a military banner surmounted by a garuda—
It appears as fierce to inimical and obstructive demons.
Next, a fierce and all-devouring tiger leaps forth—
It cuts off the path of flight of the demons,
so that not even a trace remains.
Next, he holds a thunderbolt of meteoric iron[12]*—*
With it he obliterates the host of demons.
To the left, the topmost of his eight hands
Holds the bow and arrow of Means and Wisdom—
With them he causes Means and Wisdom to play in the vastness of space.
Next, he holds the seizing and subjugating noose—
With it he rescues (sentient beings) from the pit of birth-and-death.
Next, he holds the iron hook which catches those who flee—
With it he rescues (sentient beings) from the quagmire of hell.
Next, he holds a copper meat-hook—
With it he seizes demons in the very centre of their hearts.
Next, he holds an iron chain—
With it he binds and tames the demons.
Next, he holds a ... (?)[13] shang—
With it he causes demons to go mad and swoon.
Next, he holds a rat by the hind-legs (?)[14]*—*
With it he casts down the 'soul-sign' of the demons.
Next, he holds a great boulder—
With it he overwhelms and transfixes the demons.

With his four feet firmly parted,

He subdues the haughty gods and demons with his majesty.
Clad in the still-moist skin of a demon,
He instils fear in the great and powerful ones.
His lower garment is the skin of a fierce and valiant tiger,
Thereby fixing the mark of a hero on the demon of ignorance.
From his wrathful eyes red lightning flashes,
From his rounded ears a dragon's roar resounds,
From his jutting, wrinkled nose a violent tempest blows,
From his tongue sharp and heavy hail-stones fall.
The magic apparitions of his mind fill the ten directions,
Golden sparks throb from the pores of his skin,
He glows with the light of an all-consuming mountain of fire.
He vanquishes and reduces to ashes
Demons who create hindrances and lead astray.
His nine heads overwhelm the Nine Stages with their splendour,
His hands bring the Three Realms under his control,
His feet overwhelm the universe with their splendour,
He shines with the sun and the moon of Compassion,
He is majestic, having the haughty gods and demons as his seat.

In order to subdue the harmful nāgas *and demons,*
He adorns his head with the white class of kings,
He makes his ears beautiful with the yellow class of lords,
He makes his necklace from the red brahmins,
He heaps up the shoulder-ornaments from the green class of commoners,
He adorns his feet with the black-motley outcastes.

Cries of BSVO *and* CHA *and* HA *resound—*
The thousand worlds of the Three Realms quake and tremble.
When Welsé Ngampa, the fierce lord,
Manifests a flaming body from invisible, limitless space,
We implore you to look at us with your eye of Wisdom!
We implore you to grasp everyone with your eye of Compassion!
We implore you to avert hindrances with your eye of Magic-appearances!
We implore you to avert unfavourable cicumstances and hindrances!
Set the male and female gods and demons to their task!
We implore you to 'liberate' all into the empty and unbounded space of heaven!
Homage to the God of Imperishable Life!

BSVO*! The great Mother, inseparably united with him—*
The fierce lady, great Mother, Lady of Boundless Space,
who bears six names:
When she is the mistress of the Shrine of Expansion,
She is the queen Satrig Ersang,[15] *the Mother of Boundless Space.*
When she is the mistress of the hundred thousand minor goddesses,
She is Namchi Gunggyal,[16] *the Lady who keeps the treasury of heaven.*
When she emanates from her body Yeshen Tsugpü,[17]
She is Zangsa Ringtsün, the goddess who is the mother of the youth.

When she is the mistress of the Shrine of Peacefulness,
She is Tukjé Chamma, the Loving Lady of Compassion,
The Mother who nourishes living beings.
When she is the Mother who 'liberates', the consort of Lhagö Togpa,
She is Sipé Gyalmo, the Queen of the Visible World, who is without rival.[18]
When she is the secret consort of the God Towering in the Sky,[19]
She is Khala Dugmo, the Furious Lady in the Sky, the matrix, Mother of all.
Although in her furious nature her bodily colour is green-black,
Her magic apparitions are white, yellow, red, green and blue.
Her deep-blue hair rises up into the boundless space of heaven,
Her eyebrows flash with a thousand lightnings in the sky,
Her eyes—the sun and the moon—gaze into the infinite space of heaven.
From her rounded ears the great roar of a rain-storm resounds.
From the jutting, wrinkled nose,
The snow-storm that ends the world whirls forth.
On her tongue and palate terrible flashes of lightning whirl around,
From her womb a hundred thousand fierce goddesses spring forth.
With her right hand she nourishes living beings
With the casket of heaven and earth.
With her left hand, she holds the all-curing vase of nectar.[20]

Welchen Gekhö (Plate 30)

Two tutelary deities are closely connected with the holy land of Zhangzhung: Welchen Gekhö (dBal chen ge khod), 'All-piercing Gekhö', and Meri (Me ri), 'Mountain of Fire', who will be discussed later. The epithets and characteristics of the two deities overlap to such an extent that it is not always easy to determine which one is referred to; their iconographic attributes are, however, quite distinct, so that one may immediately recognize the deity in question when examining a bronze or a thangka.

The word *gekhö* (*ge khod*) designates a class of ancient Tibetan gods. The etymology of the word is entirely obscure, but it may be taken to be a loan from the language of Zhangzhung. The *gekhö* are said to number 360 and to reside on Mount Tisé (Ti se, i.e. Mount Kailash), the sacred mountain of Zhangzhung. Their number has been connected with the 360 days of the lunar year:[21] "Ge-khod also has connection with the divination gods in *Zhang-zhung ju-thig* where the 360 gods are represented by the 360 knots of the thirty-six strings (*mdud-lha* 360)".[22] Welchen Gekhö, too, is believed to reside on Tisé.[23]

Welchen Gekhö is also known as Gekhö Sangwa Dragchen (Ge khod gsang ba drag chen), 'Gekhö, the Secret, Great Violent One'. The epithet Düdül (bDud 'dul), 'Subduer of Demons', is often joined to the name of the deity and Gekhö may be omitted, so that several variants of the name are to be found. Thus, the most complete form is Welchen Gekhö Düdül Sangwa Dragchen, alternating with Düdül Sangdrag, Gekhö Sangwa Dragchen and Welchen Gekhö. As an abbreviated form of the name, the deity may be simply known as Gekhö.

While most of these elements may also enter into the various extended names of the tutelary deity Meri, the iconography of the two deities is, as already mentioned, entirely distinct. Thus both have nine heads and eighteen arms, but of

the nine heads of Gekhö, only the top one is that of an animal (garuda), whereas the remainder are those of a demon, *sin* (*srin*). The heads to the right are white, those to the left red, and those in the middle bluish-black, which is also the colour of his body. In his sixteen hands he wields various weapons, enumerated in the invocation translated below, while with two hands he brings demons to his gaping mouth, where they are torn asunder and devoured.

He is embraced by his consort, Logbar Tsamé (Glog 'bar tsa med), 'Lady of Flashing Lightning'. She has three faces and six arms, and the colour of her body is reddish-yellow. She, too, has a name pointing to a connection with Zhangzhung, *tsamé* (*tsa med*) being the Zhangzhung word for 'woman'.[24] She is styled 'Queen of *draplas*'; like the *gekhö*, the *drapla* (*sgra bla*) are a class of ancient Tibetan gods, going back to the pre-Buddhist period, but not specifically associated with Zhangzhung. The *drapla* frequently, but not invariably, have a fierce and warlike character.[25]

The fierce form of Welchen Sangdrag,
Gekhö, king of gods, subduer-of-demons with great magic power,
Terrifying, with nine heads and eighteen arms,
Bluish-black, furious, an awe-inspiring, blazing wonder—
His form has a violent, haughty posture.
With his fierce nine heads he subdues the arrogant, black demons:
The faces to the right are shining white,
Those to the left are flaming red,
While the faces in the middle are bluish-black.
All nine heads are furious, with the face of a demon.[26]
The topmost head has the face of a garuda.
His hair is yellowish-black,
Like a mass of fire filling the universe.
Lightning, hail and snow-storms whirl around him,
His eyebrows are like flashes of lightning,
Shooting forth violent hail and thunderbolts.
His eyes, forming a triangle,[27] *are filled with rage;*
Thrown back by his eyes, red with fury,
Gods and demons swoon from fright.
Violent claps of thunder resound from his ears,
Adorned with turquoise dragons as beautiful earrings.
His nose has terrifying wrinkles,
From it swirls an apocalyptic snow-storm.
His greedily gaping mouth devours and destroys the demons;
From his tongue flashes of lightning penetrate the Three Realms.
His pale-yellow beard showers sparks,
Violent lightning falls, thunderbolts and hail whirl around.
The cry of the garuda at the top of his head
Unsettles the nāgas *at the bottom of the sea.*
His eight gaping faces subdue the eight classes of gods and demons,
*The sound—*HA HA*—of his pealing laughter*
Causes the inimical demons who lead astray and create obstacles
To swoon and fall headlong.
On the upper part of his body

The wings of a great garuda are raised and spread;
Their awesomeness overwhelms the entire universe.
The stems of the feathers are glowing, all-consuming masses of fire,
Reducing to ashes the demons who lead astray.
From each hair of his body sparks shoot forth,
Forming a mass of fire,
And subduing the female fiends and lords-of-death.[28]
The upper part of his body is enveloped from above downwards
In the flayed hide of an elephant,
To which is attached as the hem the skin of a destructive demon,
Spreading forth a hundred thousand mighty masses of fire
And reducing to ashes the demons who lead (sentient beings) astray.
The lower part of his body has a loincloth made from a fierce tiger,
With a lower hem of the skin of karakul, vulture and leopard,
Showering sparks which form a mass of all-consuming fire
With a brightness which reduces the sadag, lu *and* ṅyen *to ashes.*[29]
Flashes of red-hot lightning, rendering them immobile
as soon as it touches them,
Reduce to ashes the eight classes of destructive demons.
The head-ornament, the five classes of great garudas,
Smile as they emerge from infinite space,
Overwhelming with their majesty the black lu*-demons.*
A lu*-serpent is his beautiful, blue-spotted necklace;*
His hands and feet are adorned by the five classes of serpents,
Forming beautiful jewel tassels.

The first pair of his eighteen hands
Holds demons and vampires to his mouth.
Male and female dön[30] *he gnashes headfirst.*
The black mountain of the demons he burns to ashes,
The boiling sea of demons he dries out to the very bottom.
As for the attributes of the eight hands to the right:
Sword, axe and wheel; thunderbolt, mass of fire and crooked knife;
Staff and sceptre, brandished to the sky,
Cutting, chopping, cleaving and hacking into pieces
All demons who create obstacles,
Burning and rending them completely asunder from head to toe,
Pounding them and reducing them to food and garments.
As for the attributes of the eight hands to the left:
He holds bow and arrow, noose and hammer;
Chain, hook, and natse;[31] *the horn of a wild sheep,*
And all-dissolving, boiling water,
Pounding, binding and beating
The host of harmful and obstructive ghosts and demons;
Tying them up, dragging them away
And reducing them to food and garments;
Burning them, vanquishing them
And performing the magic of 'bombs'.[32]

The four legs are wide apart,
One pair bent in, the other stretched out,
Troubling and oppressing the eight classes of destructive demons.
Thunderbolts and snowstorms whirl about his body,
Completely overcoming the wounded demons.
As for his entourage, he is surrounded by the gekhö *gods,*
Accompanied by a further emanation
Of a hundred thousand divine warriors.

As for the great Mother, inseparably united with him—
The Queen of draplas, *Logbar Tsamé, the Lady of Flashing Lightning.*
She has three faces, six arms, and a wrathful appearance.
Her body is reddish-yellow, glowing like the sun,
She is the wrathful lady in the sky, shining like the sun.
To the right her face is that of the 'water-crystal' moon (i.e. white),
To the left, that of the 'fire-crystal' sun (i.e. red),
While the middle head glows like molten gold.
Her hair is reddish-yellow, her diadem shines brightly.
A snowstorm with flashes of lightning
Shining like fire whirls about her.
In the hair-knot of 'fire-crystal' adorning her head
She wears a töding[33] *with the lustre of the sun and the moon.*
Her eyebrows are flickering flashes of lightning,
Her eyes are shining zi-*stones,* ta-la-la,
From her ears comes the violent sound of thunder, u-ru-ru,
Her golden earrings tinkle, si-li-li,
From her nose a violent tempest whirls about,
From her gaping mouth comes a terrible gnashing of teeth.
On the silken garment on the upper part of her body
Is the skin of the Eight Great Planets,
On the lower part of her body
Is a loincloth of red-hot lightning,
Like thunderbolt-furrows showering sparks.
She is girdled with a belt of a venomous black serpent,
She subdues the noxious lu *and* dön.
On her bracelets which shine like the sun and the moon,
The twenty-eight lunar mansions are engraved.
The first pair of her hands
Holds masses of fire like a golden Mount Meru,
Burning, oppressing and troubling inimical demons.
The second pair hurls lassos like a rain of thunderbolts,
Binding and completely piercing the demons.
The last pair holds a 'red bomb'[34]
As a choice offering to the mouth of the Father,
Vanquishing the 'life-force' of the demons and fulfilling her vow.
Inseparably united, she joyously embraces the Father,
Showing the Father her sweetly smiling face,

Showing the demons her furiously wrinkled face.[35]

The entourage of Welchen Gekhö is headed by two deities who are likewise connected, as will be seen, with Meri. These deities have names which make no sense in Tibetan, but which can, at least partially, be understood as Zhangzhung terms. They are Kuchi Mangké (Ku byi mang ke) and Ati Muwer (A ti mu wer), 'Ati, King (*wer*) of the Sky (*mu*)'.[36] Kuchi Mangké is described as the "supreme son of the hearts of the Father and Mother" (i.e. of Gekhö and his consort). His body is tiny, like "a golden spindle", and has the colour of burnished gold. He has one head and two arms, and in his right hand he holds a sword, in his left, a snake forming a lasso.[37] Ati Muwer is regarded as a mythological sage, the first to teach the cult of Welchen Gekhö.[38] He is also described as a deity, a 'god of wisdom', *yeshé lha* (*ye shes lha*) and a *kulha* (*sku lha*), 'body-god'—the latter term is probably a variant of *sku bla*, a term often used to designate the gods residing on holy mountains.[39] He holds a bow and arrow of meteoric iron in his right hand, and from his left, he sends forth nine hundred thousand iron garudas.[40]

MERI (Plate 31)

Meri (Me ri) means 'Mountain of Fire', and alludes to the awe-inspiring manifestation of the deity, surrounded by flames and reducing demons to utter subjection.

Besides Meri, the short version of his name, the deity is also known by a number of other names, which may overlap with the names of the tutelary deity Gekhö (see above). Thus he is known as Meri Sangwa Pawo Gyepur (Me ri gsang ba dpa' bo gyad phur), 'Mountain of Fire, Secret Hero, Athlete-Dagger', Meri Pawo Gyepur, or simply Meri Gyepur. He is also known as Gekhö Meri Gyepur or Welchen Meri (dBal chen me ri), 'All-penetrating Mountain of Fire', or even Welchen Gekhö, in which case there is complete terminological identity with the tutelary deity Gekhö.[41]

Like Gekhö, he is closely associated with Zhangzhung, and hence he is frequently referred to simply as Zhangzhung Meri, the 'Mountain of Fire of Zhangzhung'. Iconographically, however, Meri is entirely distinct from Gekhö and can be immediately recognized. Like Gekhö, he has nine heads surmounted by a garuda, but only the lower heads are anthropomorphic; the remainder are the heads of various birds and animals. His body is golden yellow, and he wears a helmet and golden armour. In his eighteen hands he holds weapons and other objects which will be detailed below. In pictorial representations he is not embraced by a single consort, but is flanked by two female attendants. Ati Muwer appears at the top of his head and Kuchi Mangké in his heart; it may be noted that the description of these two deities differs from the one given when they form part of the entourage of Gekhö (see above).

Welchen Gekhö has nine heads and eighteen arms,
Standing with his six legs wide apart.
The colour of his body shines like refined gold.
His right face, shining white and smiling,
Is surmounted by a helmet of liquid bronze;
His left face, glowing red and reviling,
Is surmounted by a helmet of leather.

His central face, dark blue and fierce,
Is surmounted by a helmet of meteoric iron.
The topmost of the three heads to the right
Has the reddish-yellow face of a garuda.
The next, the dark-blue face of a raven,
The bottom one, the yellow face of an owl.
The topmost of the three heads to the left
Is the striped face of a tiger,
The next, the ash-grey face of an elephant,
The bottom one, the dark-blond face of a bear with hair awry.[42]
His dark-blond hair is massed together like clouds,
He hurls down various kinds of weapons like rain.
From his nose a storm whirls forth,
From his mouth flows purified gold,
His eyes are blood-shot like red clouds,
His fangs are a full circle of thunderbolts.
On his tongue flashes the red lightning
Which comes at the end of the universe.
Between his jaws he crushes the eight classes of demons and vampires.
From each single hair emanate
A hundred thousand arrow-heads of fire.
Above his head soar nine hundred and ninety thousand
Shining, great golden garudas
With turquoise eyes and thunderbolt claws.
On his yellow armour of gold
Innumerable golden sparks of fire glisten.
A violent snowstorm with flashes of lightning whirls about him.
In his eighteen hands he holds to the right—
From the topmost hand downwards—
A hook, a snake forming a noose, a cane,[43]
A hatchet, a spear, a bow and arrow,
A 'red bomb', a heart[44] *and a human skin.*
To the left he holds—
From the topmost hand downwards—
An axe, a 'water-noose', a mass of fire,
A violent wind, Mount Meru, poisoned beer,
A great conch, a magical iron weapon and the horn of an antelope.
On the upper part of his body
He wears the flayed hide of a demon,
Over which hangs the skin of a vampire.
On the lower garment, formed by the hide of a female demon,
Is the skin of a 'northern demoness of the uplands'.
On the lower part of his body
Are tattered lion and tiger skins, girthed by a venomous snake.
His necklace is formed by the skulls
Of nine hundred 'liberated' male and female demons.
At the crown of his head,
Seated on a great garuda and a lotus

Formed by the sun and the moon,
Transformed from the syllable A melting into light, is Ati Muwer.
The colour of his body is white,
He has one face, two arms, thirteen peaceful ornaments,
And the nine attributes of Brahmā.

At his heart,
Transformed from the green-blue syllable OM *melting into light,*
Is Kuchi Mangké.
His colour is similar to a turquoise,
His hair is azure-blue and bound up in a knot turning to the right.
He is beautiful, shining with se'urag[45] *jewels.*
With his right hand, held at the level of his heart,
He makes the gesture of teaching Bon.
In his left, he holds a golden sceptre
With the design of a turquoise swastika.
Beautifully adorned with jewels,
He sits with one leg drawn in, the other stretched out.
The six feet of Welchen trample underfoot
Demons, sprites, chinayaka*(-demons), golden garudas,*
Those born of the horn of se, gyalgong-*demons of tempests,*[46]
And male and female vampires.
His body is immense and his limbs massive,
He blazes within and without with all-consuming fire.

On his right is the Mother of 'liberation',
Namkhé Wölé,[47] *of dark red colour,*
Adorned with tresses of a hundred thousand 'fire-crystals'.
She holds a dagger in her hand
And has a conch-white tortoise as her throne.
On his left is the Mother of 'union',
Nelé Sipé Gyalmo,[48] *of dark yellow colour,*
Adorned with tresses of blazing golden light.
She offers a skull filled with blood to the Father.
They are locked in embrace so that they are one.
She has a fierce black bear as her throne.[49]

Among the deities which are particularly associated with Meri, the chief ones are an inner entourage of ten fierce deities (the 'Ten Terrifying Ones'), each with a consort and two 'messengers'. He is guarded by four 'gatekeeper-athletes', and sends forth twelve 'messengers'. He commands four 'female generals' as well as the protectors of the Four Lakes and the Four Rivers, all of whom are also female. Many of these deities are associated with Zhangzhung, either through their names which are, in whole or in part, in the Zhangzhung language (many goddesses have names ending in *tsamé* (*ma*), 'woman'), or through geographical associations, such as the Four Lakes and the Four Rivers, all of which are located in Zhangzhung.[50]

Plate 24 (*opposite*)
Magyü
Tibet
Photo: Per Kværne

In the centre of the thangka is the *yidam* Magyü with seven heads and sixteen arms, embraced by his consort. The thangka is a pantheon of Bon, with the various classes of deities and other supernatural beings ranged hierarchically in groups from above downwards.

In the two upper rows are seen the peaceful deities, among whom one may note the blue Küntu Zangpo (see Chapter One), the third figure from the right, embraced by a yellow consort. The following two rows contain the various tutelary deities, and below them, two rows of other fierce dieties and *siddhas*, among whom are found Takla Mebar and Drenpa Namkha (see Chapter Four) to the left.

Below them again, on the right hand-hand side, is a group of five *ḍākinīs*, while the remainder of the space in the lower part of the thangka is filled by the host of protective deities.

In the lower corners are the four door keepers, here shown in a fierce aspect with animal heads. Immediately below the main deity is an unidentified fierce deity of green colour.





Plate 25
Trowo Tsochog Khagying
Tibet
Photo: Tenzin Wangyal

The deity holds the usual attributes in his right hands: banner, sword and axe; in his left hands he holds bow and arrow in his first hand and a hook in his third; in his second hand, however, he holds a hexagram instead of a lasso. His throne is supported by five animals, from left to right: garuda, elephant, lion, horse and dragon.

Plate 26 (overleaf)

Trowo Tsochog Khagying

R.E.E. Collection

86 x 66 cm.

(also in Lauf 1972: Plate 49)

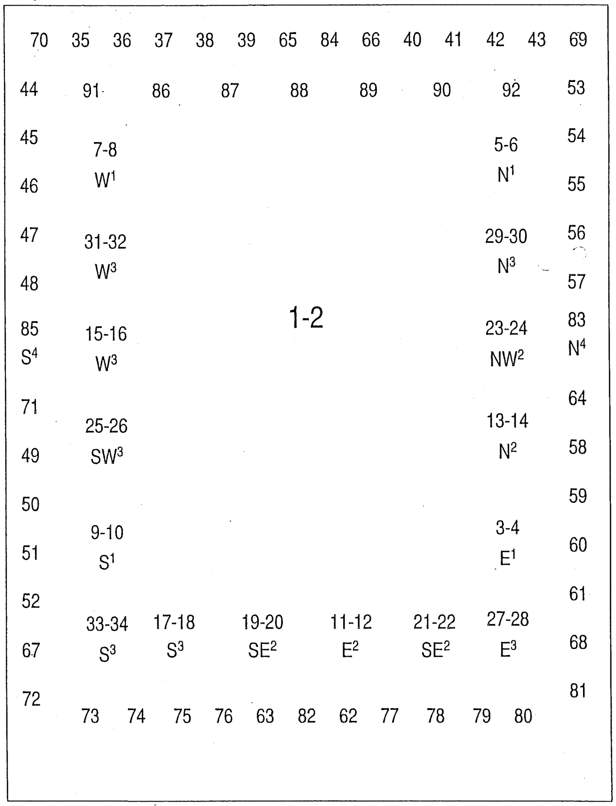


Fig. 2

The complete entourage of the tutelary deity Trowo Tsochog Khagying is portrayed on this thangka, in addition to a number of other deities. The chief deity as well as his entourage are numbered and the position of each is indicated in Fig. 2:

1-2 The tutelary deity Trowo Tsochog Khagying and his consort Khala Dugmo

3-10 The Four Wrathful Ones Who Avert Evil

East

3 Trosé Khagying (Khro gsas mkha' 'gying), 'Wrathful God Towering in the Sky'

4 consort: Nelé (Ne slas), 'Earth'[51]

North

5 Ngamsé Khagying (rNgam gsas mkha' 'gying), 'Fierce God Towering in the Sky'

6 consort: Limün (Li mun), 'Air'

West

7 Welsé Khagying (dBal gsas mkha' 'gying), 'Piercing God Towering in the Sky'

8 consort: Tsangtang (Tshangs stang), 'Fire'

South

9 Tumsé Khagying (gTum gsas mkha' 'gying), 'Ferocious God Towering in the Sky'

10 consort: Tingnam (Ting nam), 'Water'

11-26 The Eight Emanations of the Outer Circle[52]

East

11 Tongsé Drönma (mThong gsas sgron ma), God of Sight

12 consort: Lishag (Li shag)

North

13 Nyen-lha Hosang (sNyan lha ho sangs), God of the Ear

14 consort: Khashag (Kha shag)

West

15 Shang-lha Rumpo (Shangs lha rum po), God of the Nose

16 consort: Gyumshag (lGyum shag)

South

17 Gül-lha Changyug (mGul lha byang yug), God of the Throat

18 consort: Reshag (Re shag)

Southeast

19 Tsik-lha Gyurbu (Tshigs lha gyur bu), God of the Spine

20 consort: Chushag (Chu shag)

Northeast

21 Namdrak Ngarchen (gNam grags ngar chen), 'Powerful Roar in the Sky'

22 consort: Gyashag (rGya shag)

Northwest

23 Mapé Lhachen (Ma pad lha chen), 'Great God Mape'

24 consort: Kyelshag (sKyel shag)

Southwest

25 Karpo Nedzin (dKar po gnas 'dzin), 'White Place-holder'

26 consort: Sheshag (She shag)

27-34 The Four Door-keepers

East

27 Welgyi Gyalpo (dBal gyi rgyal po), 'All-piercing King'

28 consort: Zeshag (gZe zhags)

North

29 Tagdrö Gyalpo (sTag 'gros rgyal po), 'Tiger-gait King'

30 consort: Langré (Glang re)

West

31 Kyindang Mipü (sKyin 'dang mi phud)[53]

32 consort: Libar (Li bar)

South

33 Topkyi Gyalpo (sTobs kyi rgyal po), 'Forceful King'

34 consort: Khala Khyakdor (mKha' la 'khyags 'dor), 'Removing Frost in the Sky'

35-61 The Twenty-seven Powerful Ladies[54]

35-43 The Nine *Zema* (gZe ma dgu):

35 blue, having the head of a dragon

36 dark green, having the head of a snake

37 black, having the head of a jackdaw
38 white, having the head of a lion
39 red, having the head of a bear
40 dark-red, having the head of a wolf
41 dark-brown, having the head of a tiger
42 yellow-green, having the head of a garuḍa
43 blue-green, having the head of a *makara*

44-52 THE NINE FEMALE ATHLETES (GYAD MO DGU)[55]
44 reddish-yellow, having the head of a wild yak
45 white, having the head of a vulture[56]
46 black, having the head of a black bear
47 yellow, having the head of an elephant[57]
48 blue, having the head of a leopard
49 yellow-green, having the head of an owl
50 red, having the head of a falcon
51 spotted-grey, having the head of a snow-leopard
52 dark red, having the head of a boar

53-61 THE NINE *chinté* (BYIN TE DGU)[58]
53 white, the *chinté* of gods ("a white woman")
54 blue, the *chinté* of the earth ("a black woman with locks of leather")
55 black, the *chinté* of demons ("a black woman with nine faces of leather")
56 brown, the *chinté* of *mu* (*dmu*) ("a brown woman with azure-blue locks")
57 blue, the *chinté* of *lu* (*klu*) ("a blue woman with six faces")
58 white, the *chinté* of *nyen* (*gnyan*) ("a white woman with two turquoise faces")
59 red, the *chinté* of *sin* (*srin*) ("a red woman with nine heads")
60 blue-green, the *chinté* of *cha* (*phya*) ("a blue-green woman with two heads")
61 dark red, the *chinté* of *gek* (*bgegs*) ("a dark red woman with iron locks")

62-81 THE TWENTY ATHLETES AND GENERALS

62-71 THE TEN ATHLETES (GYAD BCU)[59]
62 The golden dwarf
63 The conch-white dwarf
64 The turquoise dwarf
65 The copper-coloured dwarf
66 The iron-coloured dwarf
67 The striped tiger[60]
68 The blue dragon
69 The white yak
70 The blue garuḍa
71 ... ?[61]

72-81 THE TEN GENERALS (DMAG DPON BCU)
72 Having the head of an elephant
73 Having the head of a bear
74 Having the head of a *makara*
75 Having the head of a wolf
76 Having the head of a snow-leopard
77 Having the head of a garuḍa
78 Having the head of a heron
79 Having the head of a pig
80 Having the head of a bear
81 Having the head of a tiger

82-85 THE FOUR OUTER DOOR-KEEPERS[62]
82 *east*: white, having the face of a lion
83 *north*: brown (?), having the face of a pig
84 *west*: blue, having the face of a dragon
85 *south*: black, having the face of a bear

In addition to these figures, the thangka shows a number of other figures, divine as well as human. In the central part of the second row may be seen the Five Enlightened Ones in their aspect as heads of the Five Spiritual Families, Gyalwa Riknga (rGyal ba rigs lnga), each with a consort (86-90). They are flanked by two tutelary deities, Welsé Ngampa (91) to the left and Lhagö Thogpa (92) to the right.

In the bottom row are seated five persons in religious garb; the fifth wears the robes and 'lotus hat', *pesha* (*pad zhva*), of a *drangsong* (*drang srong*), a fully ordained monk. He faces a table on which are placed offerings appropriate to a fierce deity, viz. red offering-cakes, *torma* (*gtor ma*). To the right are five fierce deities belonging to the class of 'Protectors of the Doctrine', *tensung* (*bstan srung*). Only the second, the goddess Sipé Gyalmo (Srid pa'i rgyal mo), 'Queen of the Created World' (see Chapter Three), can be identified.



Plate 27

Welsé Ngampa

Völkerkundemuseum der Universität Zürich

92 x 70 cm.

(also in Lauf 1971: Plate 3 (p. 36), text p.29-30; detail, central deity only)

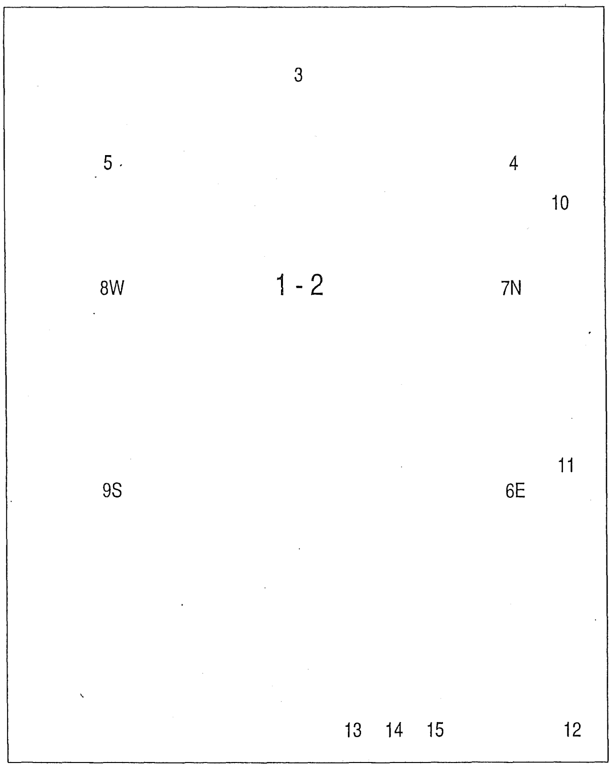


Fig. 3

The central dark-blue deity is Welsé Ngampa (1) with nine heads and eighteen arms, embraced by his consort 'the Great Fierce Mother', Ngammo Yumchen (rNgam mo yum chen) (2). Immediately above the Father and Mother is Künzang Gyalwa Düpa (3). To the right of the main deity is the Wrathful Deity of Speech, Lhagö Togpa (Lha rgod thog pa) (4), dark blue, with four faces and eight arms, embraced by his consort Sipé Gyalmo (Srid pa'i rgyal mo); to the left is the Wrathful Deity of Mind, Tsochog Khagying (gTso mchog mkha' 'gying) (5), dark blue, with three faces and six arms, embraced by his consort Khala Dugmo (mKha' la gdug mo).

On the thangka it is further possible to identify the 'Four Wrathful Ones Who Avert Evil', Dogché Trowo (Zlog byed khro bo), corresponding to deities nos. 3, 5, 7 and 9 of Plate 26, with their respective consorts. On the present thangka they can be located on Fig. 3 as nos. 6-9. The majority of the remaining multitude of minor deities cannot be confidently identified. There is no doubt that they correspond in a general way to the minor deities forming the entourage of Trowo Tsochog Khagying, portrayed on Plate 26. Thus nos. 10-12 belong to the troupe of the Nine *chinte* (*byin te*), identical with nos. 58, 59 and 57 respectively of Plate 26. In the bottom row are included the tutelary deity Gaṇacakra (13)[63] and the two Protectors of the Doctrine, Nyipangsé (Nyi pang sad) (14) and Menmo (sMan mo) (15), who are particularly associated with Mount Kailash and hence with the holy land of Zhangzhung (see Chapter Three).

In the lower left-hand corner may be seen three lamas seated beside a table laden with ritual offerings. To the right of the table two laymen and a laywoman appear in a lotus, as if being reborn in a celestial sphere; they surely represent the lay patrons who commissioned the thangka.



Plate 28

Welsé Ngampa

Joachim Baader—Schoettle Ostasiatica,
Galerie für tibetische Kunst, Munich

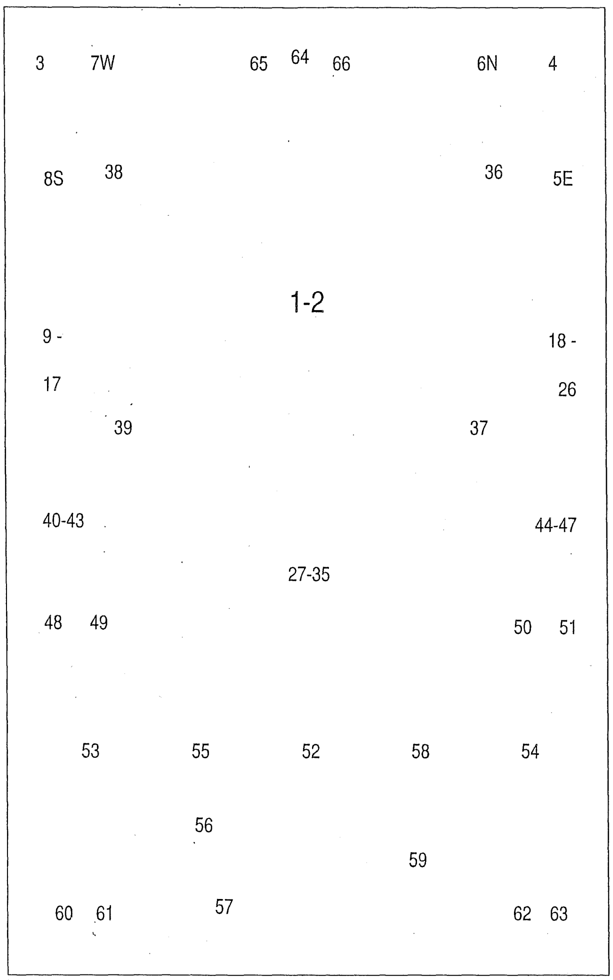


Fig. 4

In the centre is the tutelary deity Welsé Ngampa with nine heads and eighteen arms, holding the attributes described in the invocation (1) (p. 78). He is embraced by his consort, whose colour and attributes likewise correspond to the invocation (2). He stands on a lotus throne supported by five animals, from the left: lion, elephant, horse, dragon and garuda.

In the upper right and left corners are two other tutelary deities: Lhagö Thogpa to the left (i.e. to the deity's right) (3), and Trowo Tsochog Khagying to the right (4), embraced by their consorts, Sipé Gyalmo and Khala Dugmo respectively.
He is accompanied by the 'Four Wrathful Ones Who Avert Evil', Dogché Trowo (Zlog byed khro bo), each with three heads and six arms and embraced by a consort:

5 *east*: Trosé Khagying
6 *north*: Ngamsé Khagying
7 *west*: Welsé Khagying
8 *south*: Tumsé Khagying

On these deities, see Plate 26. Together with the central deity they form a pentad of deities who have transcended birth and death; this is marked by the clouds separating them from the other deities portrayed on the thangka.

The twenty-seven goddesses forming the entourage of Welsé Ngampa are portrayed in groups, corresponding to the same groups that form the entourage of Trowo Tsochog Khagying in the thangka on Plate 26:
9-17 THE NINE *Zema*
18-26 THE NINE FEMALE ATHLETES
27-35 THE NINE *Chinté*

36-39 THE GUARDIANS OF THE FOUR QUARTERS:
Four animals, yak, dragon, garuda and tiger, leap forth from behind the main deity. Clearly they are guardians of the four directions. As the yak is normally assigned to the north and the tiger to the south, the dragon and garuda may be placed to the east and the west respectively:
36 *east*: dragon
37 *north*: yak
38 *west*: garuda
39 *south*: tiger

40-47 THE EIGHT GODDESSES OF OFFERINGS, CHÖPE LHAMO GYE (mChod pa'i lha mo brgyad)

48-51 THE GODDESSES OF THE FOUR SEASONS

52-59 PROTECTORS OF BON:
52 Sipé Gyalmo (Srid pa'i rgyal mo)
53 Nyipangsé (Nyi pang sad)
54 Menmo (sMan mo)
55 Machen Pomra (rMa chen pom ra)
56 Midü Champa Traggo (Mi bdud 'byams pa khrag mgo)[64]
57 Yeshey Welmo (Ye shes dbal mo)
58 Tsen Hurwa (bTsan Hur ba)
59 Yumsé (Yum sras)

60-63 THE FOUR DOOR KEEPERS (SGO BA BZHI)
60 *west*: bear-face
61 *south*: makara-face
62 *east*: lion-face
63 *north*: dragon-face

64 Gyalwa Düpa (rGyal ba 'dus pa)

TWO LAMAS:
65 Dawa Gyaltsen (b. 1796)
66 Sherap Gyaltsen (1356-1415)



Plate 29

Welsé Ngampa

Tibet

Photo: Per Kværne

In the centre of the thangka is the *yidam* Welsé Ngampa with nine heads and eighteen arms, embraced by his consort, the Lady of Boundless Space. Their colours, attributes, etc. are as described in the invocation (p. 77). The deities which fill the remaining space on the thangka are not, as one might have expected, the specific entourage of Welsé Ngampa, but are the twelve principal tutelary deities of Bon, identified by inscriptions below each deity:

Top row, centre:	Meri (Me ri)
Second row, left:	Raksha Chidül (Raksha spyi 'dul)
right:	Purpa Rampa (Phur pa ram pa)
Third row, left:	Drenpa Namkha (Dran pa nam mkha')
right:	Sangchog (gSang mchog, i.e. Ma rgyud)
Fourth row, left:	Drugsé Chempa ('Brug gsas chem pa)
right:	Tsochog Khagying (gTso mchog mkha' 'gying)
Fifth row, from left to right:	Traktung Rolpa (Khrag mthung rol pa)
	Takla Mebar (sTag la me 'bar)
	Lhagö Thogpa (Lha rgod thog pa)
	Nampar Jompa (rNam par 'joms pa)
	Bumpa Saya ('Bum pa sa ya)

All the deities are embraced by consorts except Meri, Takla Mebar and Nampar Jompa.

The thangka further shows the Five Great Garudas. In the top row, on either side of Meri, are, from left to right:

The great garuda of Perfect Action (*phrin las*)
The great garuda of Infallible Mind (*thugs*)
The great garuda of Auspicious Good Quality (*yon tan*)
The great garuda of Unimpeded Speech (*gsung*)

Below the second garuda is the slightly smaller, white figure of the fifth garuda, the great garuda of Immutable Body (*sku*).
In the same position on the other side of the thangka is a skull with the brain exposed and the eyes hanging out of their sockets as an offering to the fierce deities.



Plate 30
Welchen Gekhö
V. d. W. Collection
90 x 60 cm.

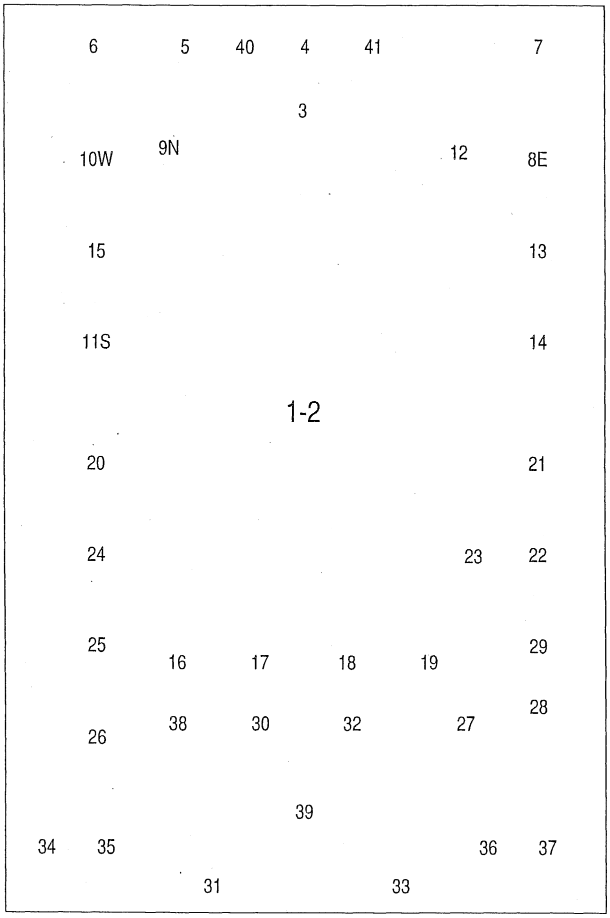


Fig. 5

The bluish-black central deity can be easily recognized as Welchen Gekhö with his consort, Logbar Tsamé, 'Lady of Flashing Lightning'. The attributes of Welchen Gekhö and his consort are as described in the invocation (p. 81); it should be noted, however, that while the deity is described as having nine heads, the thangka in fact portrays him with ten heads, the nine demonic faces being surmounted by the head of a garuda.

Several texts describe the entourage of Welchen Gekhö,[65] but as far as can be seen, these descriptions refer to different sets of figures from those portrayed here. He stands on a lotus throne supported by five animals: lion, elephant, tiger, horse and *makara*.

1 The 'Father' (*yab*), Sangwa Dragchen, i.e. Welchen Gekhö
2 The 'Mother' (*yum*), Mutsamé, Queen of Drapla (dGra bla'i rgyal mo Mu tsa med), i.e. Logbar Tsamé
3 The Five Great Garudas (Khyung chen rigs lnga), each characterized by a different colour
4 Ati Muwer 5 Kuchi Mangké 6 Shenlha Wökar 7. Tönpa Shenrap

8-13 The Six Great Penetrating Fierce Gods, Welgi Trochen Drug (dBal gyi khro chen drug):
8 *east*: Welmo Karser Bar (dBal mo dkar ser 'bar)
9 *north*: Welmo Ngojang Bar (dBal mo sngo ljang 'bar)
10 *west*: Welmo Marnag Bar (dBal mo dmar nag 'bar)
11 *south*: Welmo Yuwö Bar (dBal mo g.yu 'od 'bar)
12 *above*: Welmo Tingnag Bar (dBal mo 'thing nag 'bar)
13 *below*: Welmo Marmug Bar (dBal mo dmar smug 'bar)
Each goddess has three faces and six arms, and is clad in a tiger-skin loincloth.

14 Ati Muwer 15 Kuchi Mangké

16-21 The Six Little Youths:
16 The Magic Little Youth with the Body of Peacefulness, Trülpé Khye'uchung Shiwé Ku (sPrul pa'i khye'u chung zhi ba'i sku)
17 ... with the Body of Expansion, Gyepé Ku (... rgyas pa'i sku)
18 ... with the Body of Power, Wanggi Ku (... dbang gi sku)
19 ... with the Body of Ferocity, Dragpö Ku (... drag po'i sku)
20 ... with the 'Method of Throwing out' of the Lord of Death , Dortabchen (... 'dor thabs can)
21 The Little Youth of the Sky with the Radiance of *zi*, Namkhé Khye'uchung Zidangchen (Nam mkha'i khye'u chung gzi mdangs can)

22-24 The Four Fierce Gods of Action, Leki Trowo Zhi (Las kyi khro bo bzhi):
22 The Unique *lu* Consort with the Face of a *makara*, Luyi Chamchig Chusin Dong (Klu yi lcam gcig chu srin gdong)
23 The Unique Life-consort, Performer of Action, Tseyi Chamchig Lechema (Tshe yi lcam gcig las byed ma)
24 The Black Female *lu* Demon, Performer of Action, Lusin Nagmo Lechema (Klu srin nag mo las byed ma)
(Only three deities are shown on the thangka.)

25-28 The Five Gekhö:
25 Gekhö Dzomen Tiki Dag (Ge khod dzo man this kyi bdag)
26 Gekhö Ringnam Trülmo (Ge khod ring nam 'phrul mo)
27 Gekhö Sisum Kündül (Ge khod srid gsum kun 'dul)
28 ...[66]
29 Kulha Gekhö Wöpung (sKu lha ge khod 'od dpung)

30-33 The Four Door-keepers of the Four Directions:
30 *east*: tiger-face, *drisa* (*dri* za) 31 *north*: dragon-face, *nöjin* (*gnod sbyin*) 32 *west*: wolf-face *luwang* (*klu dbang*)
33 *south*: bear-face, *shinje* (*gshin rje*)

34-37 The Four Kings of the Four Quarters:

Protectors of the Doctrine:
38 Nyipangsé (Nyi pang sad) 39 Draplamo (dGra bla mo)

Lamas:
40 Tridem Chaggi Charuchen (Khri ldem lcags kyi bya ru can)[67]
41 Zhangzhung Takna Gyalpo (Zhang zhung sTag sna rgyal po)[68]



Plate 31

Meri

R.E.E. Collection

85 x 76 cm.

(also in Auboyer and Béguin 1977: Plate 204, text p. 186)

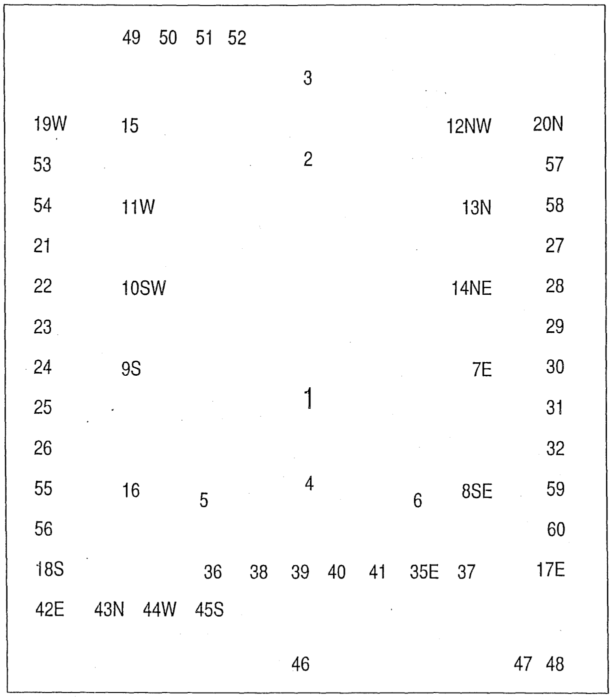


Fig. 6

The complete entourage of the tutelary deity Meri is portrayed on this thangka, in addition to the lamas who form the lineage of transmission of his cult, and a number of other deities. The chief deity and his entourage are numbered and their positions indicated in Fig.6:

1 THE TUTELARY DEITY MERI (Me ri).

2 Garuda

3 Ati Muwer (A ti mu wer)

4 Kuchi Mangké (Ku byi mang ke)

5 Namkhé Olé (Nam mkha'i o slas)

6 Nelé Sipé Gyalmo (Ne slas srid pa'i rgyal mo)

Nos. 1-6 are depicted as described in the invocation (p. 84).

7-16 THE TEN TERRIFYING ONES, EACH WITH A CONSORT AND TWO 'MESSENGERS', *ponya* (*pho nya*):[69]

East:

7 Welgi gyalpo Melagyung (dBal gyi rgyal po me la rgyung)[70]
consort: Satenma (Sra brtan ma)[71]
messengers: lion-face, vulture-head.

Southeast:

8 Kyelchen Muwer (sKyel chen mu wer)
consort: Gyerting Tsamema (Gyer ting tsa med ma)
messengers: bear-face, owl-head

South:

9 Sumpü Gyalpo (Sum phud rgyal po)
consort: Kyechema (sKyed byed ma)
messengers: tiger-face, falcon-head

South-west:

10 Ligchen Muwer (Lig chen mu wer)
consort: Gyernyen Tsamema (Gyer snyan tsa med ma)
messengers: yellow bear-face, hoopoe-head

West:

11 Kulha Yocha (sKu lha yo phya)
consort: Minchema (sMin byed ma)
messengers: leopard-face, crow-head

North-west

12 Pungchen Muwer (sPungs chen mu wer)
consort: Tinggyung Tsamema (Ting rgyung tsa med ma)
messengers: elephant-face, raven-head

North:

13 Kulha Mutur (sKu lha mu thur)
consort: Dekchenma ('Degs byed ma)
messengers: yak-face, eagle-head

Northeast:

14 Sipa Muwer (Srid pa mu wer)
consort: Ringnyen Tsamema (Ring snyan tsa med ma)
messengers: rat-face, 'demon-bird'-head

Above:

15 Pühé Dunggyung (Pus has dung rgyung)
consort: Shukdrölma (Shugs sgrol ma)
messengers: dragon-face, garuda-head.

Below:

16 Kulha Trapü (sKu lha pra phud)
consort: Sochema (gSo byed ma)[72]
messengers: wild boar-head, she-wolf-head

17-20 THE FOUR GATEKEEPER-ATHLETES (sGo ba gyad bzhi):[73]

17 *east*: a white man with the head of a lion, riding a white lion, holding a three-pointed, crystal staff (*ber ga*).

18 *south*: a blue man with the head of a *makara*, riding an aquatic demon (*pir*),[74] holding a sharp (*dbal*) sword.

19 *west*: a red man with the head of a wild boar, riding a red wild boar, brandishing towards the sky an axe of meteoric iron.

20 *north*: a black man with the head of a wild yak, riding a yellowish-white wild yak, holding bow and arrow.

21-32 THE TWELVE FEMALE MESSENGERS (Pho nya mo bcu gnyis).[75]
An individual identification of each of the Twelve Female Messengers is not possible on the basis of the text.

33-36 THE FOUR FEMALE GENERALS (dMag dpon ma bzhi):[76]

33 *west*: Takrirong (sTag ri rong), Queen of *draplas*; reddish-black, riding a tiger.



Plate 31 cont.

34 *north*: Limün Lengye (Li mun lan brgyad), wears golden armour, riding a violent storm.

35 *east*: Nelé Gyalmo (Ne slas rgyal mo), 'Queen of the Earth', wears turquoise armour, riding a *makara*.

36 *south*: Yarkyé Jewo (Yar skyes rje bo), leader of the Nine Masang Brothers,[77] wears a white silk gown and turban, riding a white horse.

37 The sister-consort of the Nine Masang Brothers, wearing the feathers of a peacock, riding a white horse.[78]

38-40 The Protectors of the Four Lakes (mTsho bzhi srung ma):[79]

38 Chatsamé (Phya tsa med), a white lady of silver, wearing a silver helmet and crystal armour, riding a black mule; protecting the silver lake of Gunggyü (Gung rgyud).

39 Tingtsamé (Ting tsa med), a blue lady of turquoise, wearing a turquoise helmet and blue armour, riding a turquoise Indian (?) falcon;[80] protecting the turquoise lake of Mapang (Ma pang).

40 Tseltsamé (rTsal tsa med), a yellow lady of gold, wearing a golden helmet and armour, riding a yellow tigress; protecting the golden lake of Langag (La ngag).

41 Betsamé (rBe tsa med), a bluish-black lady of molten metal, wearing a helmet of molten metal and blue armour of iron, riding a great garuda of meteoric iron; protecting the iron lake of Somshang (Zom shang).

42-45 The Protectors of the Four Rivers (Chu bzhi srung ma):[81]

42 *east*: Heru Khyungcham (He ru khyung lcam), wearing a tiger-skin and a golden helmet, seated on a throne supported by an all-knowing horse;[82] protecting the white conch-river.

43 *north*: Mula Tsamé (Mu la tsa med), 'Lady of Heaven',[83] with a single braid of hair and a white gown, seated on a throne supported by *shangshang*;[84] protecting the yellow gold-river.

44 *west*: Draplé Gyalmo (sGra bla'i rgyal mo), 'Queen of *drapla*', of bluish-black colour, seated on a throne supported by a mighty elephant; protecting the red copper-river.

45 *south*: Tingnam Gyalmo (Ting nam rgyal mo),[85] a black lady of iron, wearing a bluish-black cloak, seated on a throne supported by a magic peacock; protecting the blue turquoise-river.

In the bottom row, three figures to the right can be identified as important Protectors of Bon: Sipé Gyalmo, 'Queen of the Created World' (46), Nyipangsé (47) and Menmo (48). The latter two are, like Meri himself, associated with Zhangzhung. All three are dealt with in Chapter Three. To the left are three lamas, two wearing the characteristic 'lotus hat', while the lama in the middle wears a hat called *serteb* (*gser theb*), said to be "worn by high ecclesiastical dignitaries".[86] The names of the three lamas are given in short inscriptions below each, from left to right: Tsugpü Tsültrim, the *drangsong* (fully ordained monk) of the Shen (gShen) lineage; the *drangsong* Namdag Tsültrim; and the *drangsong* Gyaltsen Tsültrim.[87] Nothing is known concerning the origin or dates of these lamas.

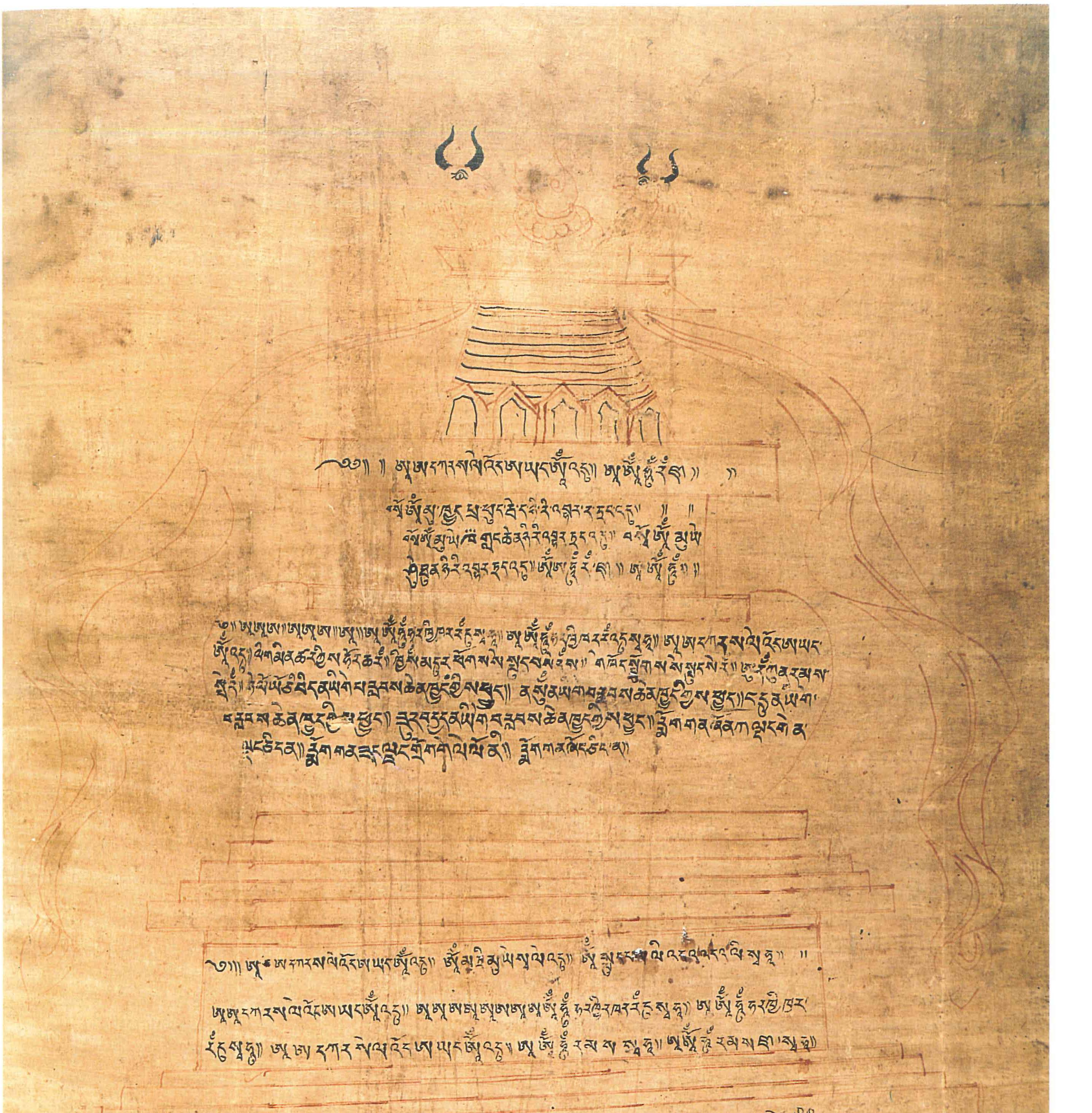
Starting from the top left-hand corner, the two top rows depict the lineage of transmission of the cult of Meri.[88] The fourth to seventh figures in the upper row (49-52) can be identified as Ati Muwer, Kuchi Mangké, Meri and Sangwa Düpa (see Chapter Four).[89] Finally, the Eight Goddesses of Offerings (mChod 'bul ma brgyad) are ranged along the left and right sides of the thangka (53-60). They represent the offerings of form, body, sound, beautiful objects, smell, mind, taste and enjoyment, but their respective attributes cannot be clearly identified on the thangka.[90] There remain a number of deities in the three bottom rows which it has not been possible to identify.

Plate 32
Reverse of thangka, Plate 31

Thangkas frequently have inscriptions on the backside, usually consisting of a series of mantras and a short prayer. In the case of Bonpo thangkas, the mantras consist of mantric syllables such as *A*, *OM*, *HŪM* etc., Tibetan words such as *wö* (*'od*), *kar* (*dkar*) and *du* (*'du*), and words and syllables such as *nyelo* (*nye lo*), *trapü* (*pra phud*), *shetün* (*she thun*), and *nyiri* (*nyi ri*), regarded as being in the Zhangzhung language.

The inscription on this thangka is contained within the outline of a stupa surmounted by the heads of two garudas flanking a flaming jewel. The horn and eyes of the garudas are given particular emphasis.[91]

The main body of the text consists of a series of different mantras, which cannot be further discussed here. The bottom line is of particular interest, as the name of one of the lamas mentioned on the front side is repeated: "It (i.e. the thangka) has been presented (or: made) by the *drangsong* of the Shen lineage, Tsugpü Gyaltsen, as the tutelary deity of this life and the next. May all sentient beings of the Three Realms (i.e. the entire universe) be encompassed by the compassion of the Three Lords, who are tutelary deities![92] Auspiciousness!"[93]



Chapter 2 Notes

1 Loseries-Leick 1994: 502 gives a brief description of a closely related deity of the Mother Tantra cycle. The story of the transmission is summarized in Karmay 1972: xxiv.

2 Briefly presented in Karmay 1972: 45 n.2 and Karmay 1975b: 197-198. *Sekhar* (*gsas mkhar*), 'temple, shrine', is a specifically Bonpo term, *gsas* corresponding to Tibetan *lha*, 'god'.

3 Discussed in Karmay 1975b: 198-200.

4 On Shenchen Luga, see Karmay 1972: 126-140 and Martin 1991: 224-305. The invocation has been published in Kværne 1990a, where the Tibetan text with references may also be found. The text is *Khro bo dbang chen gyi pho nya'i le'u*, fol.1b-4b, text no.15 in *Zhi khro sgrub skor*, Delhi c. 1967.

5 In the line-drawing published in Kværne 1990a: 121, the attributes held in the three left hands of the deity are, from above, lasso, hook and arrow (without bow). See also Plate 26.

6 *Zor*, "an offering hurled towards the enemy", Karmay 1972: 351.

7 'Liberate', *drol* (*sgrol*), is a euphemism for 'kill', the implication being that the demons are prevented from returning to the round of birth-and-death, thus being effectively liberated.

8 *dBal* indicates any pointed, sharp, piercing object, including the penetrating, consuming force of fire or lightning; it is translated 'piercing' or 'all-devouring'. See Rock 1952: I,130-131 (n.109) and Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 312-317. *gSas* means 'god', see note 2 above.

9 Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 317 "which has been dipped into the five kinds of poison" is a misunderstanding, perhaps arising from a tendency to focus on the exterior, 'demoniacal', aspect of the *yidam*.

10 *Sha 'bal*, 'flesh-cleaver' (not translated by Nebesky-Wojkowitz), is glossed *sta re*, 'axe', in *Bonpo Dictionary*: 137.

11 Note that the deity on the thangka reproduced on Plate 27 has a trident.

12 Nebesky-Wojkowitz ("arrow-head") has clearly read *mde'u* for *mthe'u*. The exact significance of *mthe'u*, 'little-finger', is not clear, but the object which can be seen on Plate 27 is the conventional representation of a thunderbolt.

13 I am at a loss to explain *glang re* in *glang re gshang chen*.

14 Nebesky-Wojkowitz ("cat") has clearly read *zi* (*mi*) for *byi* (*ba*), 'rat'. The translation of *'jug skyen* is tentative, based partly on how the animal is actually held on the thangka, and partly on the supposition that one should read *mjug*, 'hind part', for *'jug*.

15 On Satrig Ersang and Chamma (below), see Chapter One.

16 Namchi Gunggyal (gNam phyi gung rgyal), 'Celestial Grandmother, Queen of the Sky', occurs in cosmological myths. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:202 and 317 wrongly gives her name as gNam phyi *bdud* ('demon') rgyal.

17 This refers to Chimé Tsugpü, see Chapter One. On Zangsa Ringtsün, see Chapter Four.

18 On Sipé Gyalmo, see Chapter Four.

19 The deity referred to is Trowo Tsochog Khagying, on whom see above.

20 From the *dBal gsas sku rdzogs gzhung*, pp.231-292 in: *sMan ri ba'i phyag len skor dang bon skyong sogs kyi mchod bstod*, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Ochghat (India), 1975. The same text is the source of the brief summary given by Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 316-317, who has either misread the names of these two deities, or had a faulty manuscript copy of the text: for *Kha 'byings lha*, read *mKha' 'gyings lha* and for *mKha' la gdug* (Index p.608 has *gdud*, likewise an error) *mo bdag kun gyi yum*, read ... *ba ga kun gyi yum*.

21 Tucci 1949: II,724; Hoffmann 1950: 166, 269; Tucci 1970: 240, 242.

22 Karmay 1975b:198.

23 Tucci 1970:243.

24 Haarh 1968:38.

25 I adopt the spelling found in Bonpo texts, viz. *sgra bla*. The spelling used in Buddhist texts is *dgra lha*, cf. Snellgrove 1967: 258 n.20. On the *dgra lha*, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 318 ff. (Ch. XVII).

26 In Tibetan, there are a wide range of terms which are difficult to translate otherwise than by 'demon'. Such terms, which occur frequently in invocations to fierce gods, are *sin* (*srin*, which is the term occurring here), *dön* (*gdon*), *dü* (*bdud*) and *gek* (*bgegs*, 'hindrance').

27 As the god has three eyes, they form a triangle.

28 *Mamo* (*ma mo*) and *shinjé* (*gshin rje*) respectively, cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 269-273.

29 The *sadag* (*sa bdag*), *lu* (*klu*) and *nyen* (*gnyan*) are supernatural, ambiguous beings, often mentioned together. The *lu* are identified with the Indian *nāga*; in contexts where this Indian association would seem to be absent, the Tibetan term *lu* is retained. Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 288-298.

30 On the *dön* (*gdon*), cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 310-311.

31 *Natsé* (*rna rtse*), unidentified object.

32 *Tso* (*btso*), 'bomb', is a magic devise composed of various substances and infused with great destructive power. Hurling 'bombs' at enemies is regarded in Bonpo tradition as a ritual practice in which the priests of Zhangzhung were experts. Cf. Snellgrove and Richardson 1968: 100-102.

33 *Töding* (*thod rding*), an unidentified object, presumably some kind of hair ornament.

34 *Tsa* (*dzva*) is a variant form of the word *tso*, cf. note 32 above.

35 *Ge khod gsang ba drag chen yang snying gi sgrub pa*, pp.353-370, in: *Ge khod gsang ba drag chen gyi sgrub skor*, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Ochghat, India, 1973. The translation is from pp.358-362.

36 Regarding *mu* and *wer*, cf. Haarh 1968.

37 *Ge khod gsang ba drag chen gyi sgrub skor*: 265-266 (cf. note 34).

38 Karmay 1973: xxiii.

39 Karmay 1975b: 198.

40 *Ge khod gsang ba drag chen gyi sgrub skor*: 266-267 (cf. note 34).

41 Namkhai Norbu 1989: 40, with a short iconographic description of Meri, here called Welchen Gekhö.

42 On the thangka reproduced on Plate 31, the heads of tiger and bear have changed places.

43 *Denkar* (*ldan kar*), 'cane, sceptre', cf. Karmay 1972: 92 n. 6 and 350; on the thangka it resembles some kind of banner.

44 *She thun* is the Zhangzhung term for 'heart', cf. Haarh 1968: 41. On the thangka, however, the object depicted resembles an axe or a hammer.

45 *Se'urag* (*ze'u rag*), unidentified jewel.

46 Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 268 states that Byi na ya ga (Sanskrit Vināyaka, i.e. Ganeśa) is the leader of the *gek* (*bgegs*) demons. Here it would rather seem to be the name of a class of demons. The *se* (*bse*) are likewise a class of demons, cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 310. On the *gyalgong* (*rgyal 'gong*), see *ibid*.: 300. *Tamsi* (*dam sri*) literally signifies 'vampires of swamps'.

47 The text has the spelling Nam mkha'i od slas; if *od* is a mistake for *'od*, the three first syllables could be understood as 'Light of Heaven'. *Slas* as an isolated syllable remains unexplained, but cf. *Ne slas*, 'Earth', cf. note 51.

48 On the thangka reproduced on Plate 31, both goddesses are shown standing in a dancing posture to the right and left of Meri.

49 *Me ri gsang ba dpa' bo gyad phur gyi sgrub thabs mngon par rtogs pa zab lam gnad kyi 'khor lo*, pp.36-39 in: *Zhang zhung Me ri bka' gter gnyis kyi sgrub pa las tshogs bcas pa'i gsung phod*, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Ochghat (India), 1973. Cf. also Namkhai Norbu 1989: 40-41.

50 Namkhai Norbu 1989: 111-119.

51 The names of the elements are in the language of Zhangzhung.

52 The names of deities nos. 11, 13, 15, 17 and 19 begin with the name of a part of the body, followed by *lha* (or *gsas*), 'god', and finally an epithet consisting of two syllables which (apart from that of no. 11, *drönma*, 'lamp') remain unclear. No. 21 is, literally, 'Powerful Sky-sound'; the final two syllables of no. 23 signify 'great god' and no. 25 literally translates as 'White Place-holder'.

53 On *sKyin 'dang*, see Stein 1971b: 545-547.

54 The Twenty-seven 'Powerful Ladies', *wangmo* (*dbang mo*), form the entourage of Sipé Gyalmo (Srid pa'i rgyal mo), 'Queen of the Created World', see Chapter Three. They are discussed in Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 312-315.

55 For more information on the 'Nine Female Athletes', see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 313.

56 Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 313 "heron" must be wrong.

57 Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 313 "ox (or elephant ?)". The figure on the thangka has an elephant's head.

58 For the cosmogonic myth describing the birth of these goddesses from nine eggs, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 313-315, where a description of each figure may be found. The characteristic appearance of each is given in parentheses, quoting Nebesky-Wojkowitz.

59 Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 16.

60 Each of the four animals—tiger, dragon, yak and garuda—is characterized as *wel* (*dbal*), 'piercing, devouring'.

61 I am unable to translate no.71 *cha la rgyung ni*.

62 The figures on the thangka seem to be roughly equivalent to the four goddesses described by Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 315-316.

63 On Gaṇacakra, cf. Lauf 1971.

64 Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 274, according to whom the god rides an otter and wields an axe (*sta mo*) of meteoric iron and a battle-lance with a pendant of black silk.

65 The following texts are to be found in the volume entitled *Ge khod gsang ba drag chen gyi sgrub skor*, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Ochghat (India), 1973: *bDud 'dul gsang drag chen gyi mngon rtogs gsal byed sgron me*, pp.155-195: pp.161 ff; *dBal chen ge khod bdud 'dul gsang ba drag chen gyi sgrub gzhung ldog med gser gyi spu gri*, pp.233-283: pp.263 ff.

66 No name is indicated.

67 Zhangzhung sage through whom the cults of Meri and of Gekhö were passed, cf. Karmay 1972: 50.

68 Zhangzhung sage, cf. Karmay *ibidem*.

69 Each deity is described as having three faces, six arms and four feet. To the name of each is added the epithet *tuwoché* (*mthu bo che*), 'having great magic power'. To the names of the consorts is invariably prefixed the term *yungdrung* (*g.yung drung*), 'eternal'. Each pair of messengers consists of one having the 'face' of an animal and one having the 'head' of a bird. The description is found in *Me ri gsang ba dpa' bo gyad phur gyi sgrub pa'i phrin las*, pp.123-217, in *Zhang zhung Me ri bka' gter gnyis kyi sgrub skor*, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Ochghat (India), 1973, cf. pp.174-180. The descriptions of other groups of deities in the entourage of Meri are taken from the same text.

70 *rGyung* is a Zhangzhung word meaning 'lightning'; this would fit well with the terms *dbal* and *me*, 'fire'. Cf. Haarh 1968: 37.

71 *Sra* is a Zhangzhung word which may mean 'supreme, utmost' (Tibetan *rab*), cf. Haarh 1968: 32; her name would thus mean 'the Supremely Firm'.

72 There are certain patterns in the names of these gods and their consorts: the gods of the cardinal directions and below are all styled *gyalpo* (*rgyal po*), 'king', or *kulha* (*sku lha*), 'body-god', a designation usually reserved for gods residing on sacred mountains. The names of their consorts may be translated as follows: 'Birth-giver' (9), 'Ripener' (11), 'Support-giver' (13) and 'Sustainer' (16). The gods of the intermediate directions all have the Zhangzhung term *muwer* (*mu wer*), 'King of the Sky', as the second part of their names, while the second part of the names of their consorts is *tsamema* (*tsa med ma*), the Zhangzhung word for 'woman', cf. Haarh 1968: 38.

73 Pp.181-182, cf. note 61 above.

74 A *pir* (*pir*), here described as an 'aquatic monster' (*chu srin*, Sanskrit *makara*), is usually shown as a monster with a balloon-shaped body (sometimes said to have the shape of a gong). On the thangka it is portrayed as a *makara*.

75 Pp.182-185, cf. note 61 above.

76 Pp. 185-190, cf. note 61 above. The fourth member of this group is in fact a male.

77 Masang Püngu (Ma sangs spun dgu) are explicitly stated to be 'brothers' (*ming po*). On the Nine Masang Brothers in a Buddhist context, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 156.

78 The text states that she holds a drum and a *shang* (*gshang*),

'flat-bell', as her attributes; these objects are held by the figure which is second from the left in the same row. Nevertheless, the peacock dress and the white crane make the identification of the figure numbered 37 practically certain.

79 Pp.190-192, see note 69 above. On the Four Lakes, cf. Namkhai Norbu 1989: 111-113.

80 *rGya khra* could also be 'Chinese falcon', as *rGya* can be short for *rGya gar*, 'India', as well as *rGya nag*, 'China'.

81 Pp.192-195, cf. note 61 above. On the Four Rivers, cf. Namkhai Norbu 1989: 115, Wylie 1962: 121 note 61.

82 On the thangka the four goddesses are seated not on thrones, but on the animal in question. On the 'all-knowing' (*cang ches*) horse, cf. Stein 1959: 535-542.

83 Mula Tsamé (Mu la tsa med) is in the Zhangzhung language, cf. Haarh 1968.

84 The *shangshang* (*shang shang*) is a mythological animal, half bird, half human. See Plate 58 below.

85 Zhangzhung *ting* can mean 'water', 'blue' and 'turquoise', cf. Haaarh 1968: 32; *tingnam* (*ting nam*) is found as an epithet to *yu* (*g.yu*), 'turquoise'.

86 Snellgrove 1967: 274 (Plate VI(a)).

87 "gshen gyi drang srong gTsug phud tshul khrims la na mo/ drangs (*sic*) srong rNams bdag (*sic*) tshul khrims la na mo/ thabs zhes drangs (*sic*) srong rgyal mtshan tshul khrims la na mo/ bkra shis/."

88 On the transmission of the cult of Meri, cf. Karmay 1972: 112.

89 The identification is confirmed by an inscription on a thangka published in Thangka-Kalender 1982: "Juni" and in Essen/ Thingo 1989: 217.

90 Pp.142-144, see note 61 above.

91 On Bonpo stupas, see Denwood 1980.

92 The Three Lords are Ati Muwer, Kuchi Mangké and Welchen Ghekhö (i.e. in this context Meri), according to Namkhai Norbu 1989: 32.

93 "gShen gyis drangs (*sic*) srong rTsug (*sic*) phud rgyal mtshan gyis tshe bdi' (*sic*) phyis 2 kyis yid dam du bzhangs (*for* bzhengs) pa yin/ khams gsum sems can thams cad yid dam gon po rnams (*sic*) 3 kyis thugs rjes bzung 1/ bkra shis/."

CHAPTER THREE

Protectors and Local Deities

The 'Protectors', *sungma* (*srung ma*), are an important category of gods within the pantheon of Bon. They are frequently styled *bönkyong* (*bon skyong*), 'Protectors of Bon', *kakyong* (*bka' skyong*), 'Protectors of the Word', or *tenkyong* (*bstan skyong*), 'Protectors of the Doctrine'. Although their character and general appearance correspond to similar deities in Buddhism, the Protectors of Bon have their individual attributes, mythology and cult. Most of them manifest themselves in fierce form, although there are exceptions to this rule.

Sipé Gyalmo (Plate 33)

Chief among the Protectors of Bon is Sipé Gyalmo (Srid pa'i rgyal mo), 'Queen of the Created World'. Her name is often abridged to Sigyal (Srid rgyal). It is said that she was originally one of the demonic beings called 'the Female Arrogant Ones', and that she was compelled to become a religious protector when Takla Mebar (see Chapter Four) subdued her by giving her his semen.[1] She is also known as Namchi Gunggyal (gNam phyi gung rgyal), 'Grandmother of Heaven, Queen of the Sky'.[2]

In her most common aspect, she rides a black or a red mule—thus obviously resembling the Buddhist goddess Palden Lhamo (dPal ldan lha mo), 'the Glorious Goddess'—and has three faces and six arms. She also has a dark-brown manifestation, and, finally, two forms—a white and a black—riding on birds. Among the many sacred dances of Bon—dances which are still performed today in Bonpo monasteries—one is entirely devoted to representing six different manifestations of Sipé Gyalmo, each being related to a particular time of the day and characterized by a different colour.[3]

The following invocation is directed to Sipé Gyalmo 'Riding a Red Mule', Sigyal Drelmar (Srid rgyal drel dmar), and is excerpted from a Tantra focusing on the goddess:[4]

As for her three faces,
The face to the right is white and smiling,
That to the left is red and fierce,
That in the centre is bluish-black and wrathful.
Her blackish hair stands on end,
Her three eyes shine like the essence of the sun;
Her nose has the beautiful wrinkles of a wrathful deity,
Her mouth gapes like a receptacle for an all-consuming fire-offering,
Her innumerable teeth are ranged like snow mountains,

Her tongue makes a terrible clicking sound,
Her beard sends forth sparks as from an apocalyptic fire,
Her roaring resounds like thunder in the sky.
The upper part of her bluish-black body is adorned
With the moist, ash-grey skin of an elephant and of a human being;
On the lower garment, consisting of a moist tiger-skin,
Is attached the skin of a fierce bear.
Reddish-yellow venomous snakes are intertwined,
Forming writhing necklaces;
She is adorned with a threefold rosary
Of dry, moist, and blood-dripping skulls.
As for her terrifying attributes,
In her top right hand she holds a zhingchug[5]—
It is adorned with a crown of silk of various colours,
Fluttering in the expanse of invisible space.
In her top left hand a swastika
Encompasses the secret space of the treasury of her heart.
Her middle right hand brandishes a sword
To the sky, like a flaming weapon.
Her middle left hand holds a trident
While a great drum resounds like thunder.
Her lower right hand clasps a pointed dagger;
Its triangular blade is thrust into the heart
Of those who have perverted views.
Her lower left hand holds a bowl
Filled to the brim with billowing blood.
As for the way she places her legs:
In order to subdue the four demons of delusion
And perfect the four kinds of forceful action,
She haughtily draws in one leg and stretches out the other.
As for her mule,
The bluish-black tips of its ears are adorned with silk,
Nāga *kings are halter and bridle,*
Male and female vampires are made into her saddle,
The still-moist skin of a corpse is her saddle carpet,
The saddle-strap is fixed with a hundred thousand
Pieces of cloth taken from corpses.[6]
The stirrup-bands are made from the still-moist skin of corpses
To which are attached stirrups made of skulls.
The four hoofs of her mule
Are supported by the Four Great Kings of the Quarters.

It is said that the cult of the goddess as a Protector of Bon was introduced by Shenchen Luga (gShen chen Klu dga', 996-1035). Her cult has remained extremely popular.[7]

Nyipangsé and Menmo (see Plates 27 and 31)

Nyipangsé (Nyi pang sad) is above all associated with Zhangzhung. He is the guardian deity of the meditational teachings known as Dzokpa chenpo Zhangzhung nyengyü (rDzogs pa chen po Zhang zhung snyan rgyud), 'The Great Perfection, the Aural Transmission of Zhangzhung', which contain meditational practices believed to have been transmitted by the sages of Zhangzhung.[8] It was the 'Teacher of Bon', *gyerpung* (*gyer spungs*) Nangzher Löpo (sNang bzher lod po), who lived in the eighth century, who compelled Nyipangsé to become a Protector of Bon. He did this by performing the ritual of hurling a 'bomb', *tso* (*btso*), at the god, at the same time subduing all the *sipa* (*srid pa*) deities, male as well as female.[9]

The dwelling of Nyipangsé is the summit of Mount Meru, but this cosmic mountain is identified with Mount Tisé (Ti se, i.e. Kailash) in Western Tibet, the holy moutain of Zhangzhung. He is subordinated to the mighty tutelary deity of Zhangzhung, Welchen Gekhö (see Chapter Two).

In invocations to Nyipangsé, the god is described as *kasung* (*bka' srung*), 'Guardian of the Word', and *tenpé kakyong* (*bstan pa'i bka' skyong*), 'Protector of the Word of the Doctrine'. He is a deity of the category styled *gyalpo* (*rgyal po*), 'king'. He is 'king of the *drapla*' (*sgra bla'i rgyal po*) and 'king of *tsen*' (*btsan gyi rgyal po*). *Gyalpo*, *drapla* and *tsen* are all closely related categories of deities, fierce and potentially harmful, but capable of being bound by oaths to protect the Doctrine.

Nyipangsé has certain traits in common with the great Buddhist religious protector Pehar (Pe har). Both are styled Shelgying Karpo (Shel 'gying dkar po), 'White Crystal-haughty One',[10] the colour of both is white, and they are both known as *sogdag* (*srog bdag*), 'Lord of Life-force'.

The name Nyipangsé is in the Zhangzhung language, but cannot be entirely explained. *Se* (*sad*) means 'god' and *nyi* probably 'sun' (cf. Zhangzhung *nyi ri*, Tibetan *nyi ma*, 'sun'). He is sometimes mentioned as belonging to a group of three deities in which a celestial phenomenon is part of the name: *Nyi*pangsé, *Da*pangsé (*Zla* pang sad, cf. Tibetan *zla ba*, 'moon'), and *Zha*pangsé (*gzha'*, 'rainbow'). *Pang* remains unexplained.

Nyipangsé does not have a consort, but he does have a goddess as his companion, the *nammen* (*gnam sman*) Namchi Gunggyal (gNam phyi gung rgyal), 'Grandmother of the Sky, Queen of Heaven'. This goddess is also known from the epic of Gesar.[11] The *men* (*sman*) are a class of ancient Tibetan female deities in which Bonpos as well as Buddhists believe.[12] This particular *men* is often known simply as Menmo (sMan mo), or more fully as Men Kumaratsa (sMan Ku ma ra tsa). She, too, was subdued by Nangzher Löpo.[13] She has an entourage consisting of '*men* of snow-mountains' (*gangs sman*), '*men* of slate-mountains' (*g.ya' sman*), '*men* of cliffs' (*brag sman*), '*men* of pasture' (*spang sman*), '*men* of forests' (*nag sman*), '*men* of rivers' (*chu sman*), '*men* of lakes' (*mthso sman*) and '*men* of islands' (*do gling sman*).[14]

Nyipangsé is portrayed as a mighty king, clad in white robes and wearing a white turban. He rides a white horse. He does not have fierce or demonic attributes. One of his characteristics, shared by other gods, is the ability to appear under innumerable guises and different names, "remaining neither here nor there"; this fluid, indeterminate form is part of his divine nature. In his hands he holds a banner of white silk. Menmo is likewise without demonic traits. She rides a white yak.

The invocation to Nyipangsé translated below was composed by Sherap Gyaltsen (1356-1415), the great scholar and organiser of Bonpo monastic life, in the monastery of Menri (sMan ri) in Tsang, which he founded in 1405:[15]

BSVO! Do not forget, do not forget, your former oath do not forget!
Do not pass by, do not pass by, do not relax attention to your oath!
Obediently performing tasks that Welchen Gekhö sets—
Protector of the Doctrine's Word, King Nyipangsé!
King of drapla, *lord of life-force, possessing skill in magic power!*
A male, white as conch-shell, the height of a spear:
On his body a garment of white silk flutters, lhup-sé-lhup.
At his waist a tiger-sword in a leopard-scabbard clatters, tra-la-la.
On his head a conch-white plait of hair is twisted round, dem-sé-dem.
In his hand a banner of white silk is displayed, cha-ra-ra.
As for his mount—a horse with red harness, prancing about, dring-sé-dring.
As for his entourage—a thousand vassal kings crowding together, bup-sé-bup.
When given a name by the Bon of Zhangzhung,
He is called 'White Crystal-haughty' Nyipangsé.
When given a name by the king of Trom,[16]
He is called 'Lord of Vital-force', King of the Created World.
When given a name by the Bon of Eternal Tazik,[17]
He is called 'White Crystal-haughty'.
When given a name by the Dharma of India,
He is called Tsangpa with the conch-white hair-knot.
When given a name by the king of China,
He is called King Dapangsé.
When given a name by Pugyal Tibet,[18]
He is called 'the Great kyatrang (skya trang)*'.*
Assuming magic forms now here, now there,
He transforms himself into every god and demon.
Remaining neither here nor there,
He accompanies the Eight Classes of Gods and Demons.
Performing magic tricks now here, now there,
He spreads abroad various tricks.
As for dwelling, he dwells on the summmit of Mount Meru.
As for quaking, he causes the ten directions to quake.
As for action, he acts as guardian of the Doctrine, the Word of Bon.
As for realization, he realizes the rites of the sages who have taken vows.

With your entourage of emanations and secondary emanations,
Without forgetting your former solemn oath,
We implore you to come like lightning, with magic feet!
We implore you to come with a loving mind, like a mother!
We implore you to come with a longing mind, like a friend!

Enjoy! Every desirable thing, every pleasure and ornament—enjoy!
Eat! The sacred 'offering-cake of the Word'—eat!
Guard! The Doctrine of Eternal Bon—guard!

Realize! The thought of the sages who have taken vows—realize!
Praise! The 'Stage of Bon of the Triple Universe'—praise!
Repel! Adverse circumstances and hindrances—repel!
Act! As virtuous, white companion—act!
Increase! Retinue, enjoyment, power—increase!
Bestow! Long life, well-being of cattle, success—bestow!
Remove! Harmful enemies of the Doctrine—far hence remove!
Liberate! Enemies who break their oath—quickly liberate!

Do not forget, O king, guardian of the Doctrine,
Possessing magic power and strength!
Do not swerve from the oath of Welchen Gekhö!
Do not relax attention to your former solemn oath!
Do not pass by—fulfil the task you have been set![19]

Apsé (Plate 35)

Several Protectors belong to the class of ancient Tibetan deities known as *tsen* (*btsan*). They are believed to be fierce, aggressive beings, portrayed as mounted warriors clad in armour and holding various warlike attributes. In cosmological terms, they are associated with the middle region, the region between the vault of heaven and the underworld, hence they are frequently held to reside on mountains; their characteristic colour is red.[20]

One of the major Protectors of the class of *tsen* is Apsé (A bsve). The *se* (*bse* or *bsve*) are a little-known sub-group of deities.[21] Apsé is depicted in the manner usual for a *tsen*, as in the invocation translated below. His most characteristic attribute is an owl, which he holds in his left hand; in his right he may hold a sword or a noose, or (as in Plate 34) a spear. He is styled 'cliff-*tsen*', *draktsen* (*brag btsan*), or 'king of *tsen*', and is said to dwell on the ledge of a cliff to the northeast of Mount Tisé (Kailash), 'at the border between Mon, Bal and Tibet'.[22]

The following invocation is said to have been extracted as part of the 'treasure', *terma* (*gter ma*), from Mount Dungpor in Tanag (rTa nag Dung phor) by Guru Nöntsé (Gu ru rnon rtse, b. 1136):[23]

HŪM! *Arise, O cliff-*tsen*—from the cliff-ledge arise!*
Lord of vital-force, butcher—from the cliff-ledge arise!
In your right hand you hold the sword of Wisdom,
With your left, you send forth the cliff-bird, the owl.
Your body is adorned with huge red snakes.
As for your mount, you ride a (horse styled) 'Blinding Dust-storm'.
A violent storm roars, u-ru-ru;
Lightning and hail falls, sha-ra-ra;
Magic objects[24] *are hurled like stones,* tra-la-la;
Magic spells are hurled like arrows, sha-ra-ra;
Thunder resounds in the sky, u-ri-ri;
Thunderbolts crash through the air, chem-sé-chem;
The ground is lit up like fire, lam-sé-lam;
Huge red snakes slither and slide, nyu-lu-lu.

When I, a sage,[25] *call upon*
The great Lord of Life-force with his entourage,
Do not hesitate, come quickly here!
Bring the army of the Eight Classes of Gods and Demons
Up against the enemy who contends with me!
*Inflict upon him 'sword-sickness', '*tsen*-ache', vomiting of blood!*
Hurl at him defilement, disorder, and weapons like rain!
Send sudden madness like arrows!
Kill the males, 'liberate' the females, cut off the line of offspring!
Cut off the vital-force, tear out the heart, grasp the breath!
Eat their flesh and drink their blood and flay their skin!
Without delaying for a year, a month, or a day,
At this very moment swiftly send arrows of illness!
Cut off the 'life-root' of the enemies who have broken their pledge!
Accomplish this task swiftly!
Fulfil the task you have been set![26]

Plate 33
Sipé Gyalmo
Detail of a thangka (Plate 49), Tibet
Photo: Per Kværne

The goddess is depicted on a thangka painted around the middle of this century in eastern Tibet. She is shown in her aspect of 'the Lady Riding a Red Mule', Drelmarma (Drel dmar ma). She has three faces—white, blue, and red—and six arms holding various objects strictly in accordance with the invocation translated on p. 107.

DRAKPA SENGÉ (Plate 34)

While some of the Protectors of Bon are of ancient Tibetan origin, this Protector is a fairly recent historical figure. Drakpa Sengé (Grags pa seng ge) is the name of the first 'Red Hat' (Zhva dmar) Incarnation (1283-1349) of the Karmapa sub-school of the Kagyüpa school. The story of how this Buddhist monk came to provide the name of a Protector of Bon has been recounted by S.G. Karmay.[27] Briefly, the story is as follows: The Tenth Zhamar Incarnation, Chödrak Gyatso (Chos grags rgya mtsho, 1742-92), was involved with the Gorkha invasion of Tibet in 1792. When the Gorkhas had been driven out of Tibet, the property of Chödrak Gyatso was confiscated by the Tibetan government. He died in the same year, but his spirit turned into a malignant ghost. Eventually, the abbot of the Bonpo monastery of Menri (sMan ri), Sherap Gonggyal (Shes rab dgongs rgyal, b.1784, enthroned as abbot in 1810), summoned him and compelled him to swear an oath to become a Protector of Bon. The abbot was able to do this because he could invoke a connection in former lives between himself and the malignant spirit: the spirit had been none other than Shenchung Gowo (gShen chung go bo), a son of the Lord of Demons, Khyappa Laring (Khyab pa lag ring); his mother was one of Tönpa Shenrap's wives. The son was looked after by one of the disciples of Shenrap, Yungdrung Tsukshen Gyalwa (g.Yung drung gtsug gshen rgyal ba). The latter was now reborn as the abbot, while the son of the Lord of Demons was reborn successively as each incarnation of the Red Hat lineage. The abbot consequently gave him the name of Drakpa Sengé, the name of the first incarnation. Drakpa Sengé is shown wearing the robes and the hat of a Buddhist monk, riding a horse.

Plate 34
Drakpa Sengé
Detail of thangka (Plate 49), Tibet
Photo: Per Kværne

Drakpa Sengé is portrayed as a Buddhist monk, richly dressed in the robes of a high lama and wearing the 'golden hat', *sersha* (*gser zhva*), reserved for *tulkus*, i.e. incarnated lamas.[28] In his right hand he holds a banner, and in his left, a jewel.

PANGTSEN (Plate 36)

Innumerable minor deities are the local protectors of specific sites. They are seldom known outside their own locality, and indeed may often lack an individual personal name. Such is the case with Pangtsen (sPang btsan), literally '*Tsen* of the Meadows', who protects the site of a small monastery in eastern Tibet.







Plate 35
Apsé
Wood carving, Tibet
Photo: Ogyenthar

Apsé is one of the many fierce deites of the *tsen* class. Like the *tsen* in general, he rides a horse, the colour of his body is red, and he wears armour and a helmet. This woodcarving is from a chapel dedicated to the cult of fierce deities, eastern Tibet. It portrays Apsé holding his attribute, the owl; in his right hand he grasps a spear. A bow and arrow can be seen protruding from a quiver behind his back. He is surrounded by flames and military banners, accentuating his martial, aggressive character.



Plate 36
Pangtsen
Painting on wooden board, Tibet
Photo: Per Kværne

Nothing is known of the mythology of this local deity, a '*tsen* of the meadows' (*pang*), guarding the site of a small monastery in eastern Tibet. The deity is, as one would expect when dealing with a *tsen*, of red colour and rides a prancing horse. He does not wear armour or helmet, but his facial expression is fierce. In his left hand he holds a red and yellow flag, while he holds the reins of his horse with the other. He has two quivers, one covered by tiger skin and containing arrows, the other covered by leopard skin for his bow. A *lu* (*klu*) holding a flower is seen emerging from a pool or lake; the *lu* are, like their Indian counterparts the *nāgas*, guardians of treasures. Consequently, three precious jewels are likewise seen in the lake. A deer is shown in the bottom right-hand corner.

Chapter 3 Notes

1 Karmay 1972: xxi.

2 Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 313.

3

Time	Colour	Name
1. Evening (*srod*)	black	'Life-cutter' (Srog gcod ma)
2. Midnight (*nam gong*)	blue	'Admonisher' (gZhen 'debs ma)
3. Dawn (*tho rangs*)	white	'Controller' (dBang sdud ma)
4. Sunrise (*nyi shar*)	yellow	'Diffuser of Light' ('Od 'phro ma)
5. Midday (*nyin phyed*)	red	'The Radiant' (bKra gsal ma)
6. Sunset (*phyi phred*)	purple-brown	'Having Bright Rays' (Zer gsal ma)

The dance is called the 'Six Periods of Sigyal' (*Srid rgyal dus drug*).

4 *Ma mo 'dus pa'i yang snying gi rgyud*, pp.11-60 in: *Srid rgyal dre'u dmar mo'i rgyud dang 'grel ba bcas kyi gsung phod*, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Ochghat (India), 1973, pp.30-31.

5 *Zhing phyug*, unidentified object.

6 The text is not clear at this point and the translation is abbreviated.

7 A short description of a vision of Sigyal is found in Karmay 1972: 135. On the introduction of the cult of Sigyal by Shenchen Luga, cf. Karmay 1975b: 200.

8 The collection of texts forming the Aural Transmission of Zhangzhung has been published by Lokesh Chandra (ed.), *History and Doctrine of bon-po Niṣpanna Yoga*, Śata-piṭaka Series Vol.73, New Delhi, 1968. Short texts have been published by Orofino 1985.

9 On Nangzher Löpo, cf. Snellgrove and Richardson 1968: 101-105; on his subduing Nyipangsé, cf. Lokesh Chandra, *History and Doctrine* (note 8 above): 30-31.

10 Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 96, 120.

11 Stein 1956: 154; cf. also Karmay 1975b: 193, 197.

12 On the *sman*, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 198-202.

13 Cf. Lokesh Chandra, note 9 above.

14 Lokesh Chandra, *op.cit.*: 648.

15 On Sherap Gyaltsen, cf. Kværne 1991a.

16 Phrom/Khrom—referring ultimately to the Byzantine Empire—has a complex history in traditional Tibetan geographical concepts, cf. Stein 1956: 253 ff.

17 Tazik refers in general to the Iranian world, vaguely situated to the west of Tibet; in Bon tradition, Tazik is the sacred kingdom where Shenrap was born.

18 Pugyal (sPu rgyal) is a common epithet—the meaning of which is not clear—of Tibet in ancient as well as historical texts.

19 *sNyan rgyud bka' srung srog bdag rgyal po Nyi pang sad kyi bka' bsgo*, p.645 in Lokesh Chandra *op.cit.* (note 8 above). An excerpt from this invocation has been translated in Kværne 1985b: 160.

20 On the *btsan*, cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 166-176.

21 On the *bsve*, cf. *ibid.*: 310. Apsé Gyalwa (A bse rgyal ba) is mentioned *ibid.* 251.

22 Mon is in a general way the region to the south of the Himalayan range; Bal is not Nepal (Bal yul), but probably Khotan or an area to the northwest of Tibet, cf. Vitali 1990: 29 note 91.

23 On this 'treasure', cf. Karmay 1972: 166-167, especially p.166 note 4. Tanag is a district to the north of the River Tsangpo in Tsang, merging into the Changtang, cf, Ferrari 1958: 157 n. 586.

24 *Tün* (*thun*), cf. Snellgrove 1967: 256 n. 5. Snellgrove translates *thun* 'deterrents' and explains: "*thun* properly refers to various small items which are believed to be unpleasant to demons ... one harries them by hurling these items at them" (p.256).

25 *sGrub gshen*, 'a priest (*gshen*) who accomplishes (*sgrub*) (a rite or meditational procedure)".

26 *A bsve jag pa me len gyi bskul ba/ dgra bos sad* (sic) *pa'i man ngag gnam lcags thog mda'*, pp.401-403 in: *sMan ri ba'i phyag len skor dang bon skyong sogs kyi mchod bstod*, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Ochghat (India), 1975.

27 Karmay 1975b: 200-201.

28 On the *sersha* (*gser zhva*), cf. Tucci 1970: 151.

CHAPTER FOUR

Siddhas, Lamas and Dakinis

The Bon religion does not, as has already been pointed out, accept Indian origins for its doctrines and practices. Nevertheless, there are numerous figures which to a large extent correspond to the Indian Buddhist categories of *siddhas*, 'perfected ones', and the female *ḍākinīs*. As these terms are more or less assimilated into English usage, they can be employed without contradicting the Bonpo claim to non-Indian origins. Terms used in Bon texts to designate the *siddhas* are *drubtob shen* (*grub thob gshen*), 'priests who have attained spiritual perfection', *tuwoche* (*mthu bo che*), 'great magicians', and *gyerpung* (*gyer spungs*), 'teachers of Bon'—the latter term being in the Zhangzhung language. I shall refer to such figures indiscriminately as 'sages'. The Tibetan term corresponding to Sanskrit *ḍākinī* is *khadroma* (*mkha' 'gro ma*, lit. 'sky-walker'), used by Buddhists and Bonpos alike.

The Bonpo *siddhas* are individuals who, through their mastery of esoteric meditational and ritual practices, have acquired spiritual and magical powers far exceeding those of ordinary humans. Some of them are believed to have existed in a distant, indeed mythical, past when they were instrumental in transmitting the teachings of the Tantras to the world of humans, often at the same time subduing certain demons who consequently became Protectors of Bon; others are regarded as human sages, claimed to have lived in Zhangzhung or Tibet in historical times. These *siddhas* were the priests and advisors of the mighty kings of Zhangzhung as well as Tibet. Only when the kings of Tibet—in particular, Trisong Detsen (Khri srong 'lde btsan, 742-c.800)—were led astray by the evil doctrine of Śākyamuni emanating from India, did the influence of the Bonpo sages and priests decline, and with it, the fortunes of Tibet itself, which quickly fell into a state of social anarchy and moral confusion.

The *siddhas* are, however, not just mythological or historical figures. They are also the objects of worship and meditation, and thus they have—like the tutelary deities—their individual, highly symbolical iconography. In fact, some of the siddhas, as for example Takla Mebar, may at times be referred to as a *yidam*, and Drenpa Namkha may be identified with Küntu Zangpo (p. 56).

The *ḍākinīs*—whatever their ultimate origins outside the Land of Snow—are the 'fairies' of Tibet. They assume different forms and shapes, appearing as beautiful, smiling damsels, clad only in garlands carved from human bones; as old, toothless hags; or as ordinary human women of flesh and blood. Above all, they appear in visions and dreams, but whatever their guise, they are inspirators, revealers of hidden treasures and transmitters of secret doctrines.

TAKLA MEBAR (Plates 37, 38 and 39)

The name Takla Mebar (sTag la me 'bar) alternates with Taklha Mebar (sTag lha me 'bar). The latter variant can be translated as 'Tiger-god, Flaming Fire', which formerly led some scholars to interpret the figure in question as a 'Tiger-god', 'Tiger-devil', or the like.[1] It is the form Takla Mebar, however, which would seem to be the more common one, and which will be retained here.[2] It is perhaps worth noting that the first element of his name is found in that of a deity reported to possess mediums in Ladakh, viz. Taklha Wangchug (sTag lha dbang phyug).[3]

The name Takla Mebar is stated by S.G. Karmay to apply to "two different beings: one is a divinity and the other is a priest".[4] Yet the sage Takla Mebar acts as a fierce deity when he subdues his evil twin brother Dharsha Ghriwa,[5] killing him by magical means.[6] Perhaps Takla Mebar can best be understood as a borderline case between a *siddha* and a tutelary deity. On the one hand, he is a mythical figure, a disciple of Tönpa Shenrap and famous as a subduer of demons and transmitter of Tantras, especially those focussing on the deity Purpa, the personified magical dagger.[7] On the other hand, he is also worshipped as a tutelary deity, and although invariably portrayed with only one head and two arms, he nevertheless has the fierce appearance and rich symbolism of a tutelary deity. As such he has three aspects: white, black and red; further, he has the epithet *putri* (*spu gri*), 'razor', emphasizing his power to destroy obstacles and demons.

The invocation translated below was composed by the 11th abbot of the monastery of Menri (sMan ri), Yungdrung Gyaltsen, in 1669:[8]

The magically-born lord, Takla Mebar—
The colour of his body is reddish-black,
His three wide-open eyes stare furiously,
In his gaping mouth his tongue is curled back
while he gnashes his teeth.
With his right hand he whirls a golden wheel,
With his left, he brandishes nine crossed swords.
From the hairs on his body he sends forth
A host of shining, fierce deities;
His reddish-yellow hair reaches the peak of the created world,
With his feet he presses down the deepest hell.
His majesty overcomes every single harmful demon.
The innumerable host of fierce deities,
Guarding all the ten directions,
Have wing-feathers of wind, wing-feathers of fire,
Wing-feathers of sharp, crooked knives.
In their hands they hold various kinds of weapons.
From their mouths resounds a great roar of BSVO, CHA, *and* HALA.
All the host of obstructive fiends are terrified,
And, rendered powerless, flee to the furthest darkness.

It is also said that Takla Mebar wears "the flayed skin of a *matang* demon[9] on the upper part of his body, and on his lower garment, consisting of the skin of a valiant tiger, an apron of flashing red lightning; his belt is a venomous snake, his head-

ornament is made of dried human skulls and his necklace of still-moist human heads."[10]

Sangwa Düpa (Plate 40)

Sangwa Düpa (gSang ba 'dus pa), 'Concentration of Secrets', is a mythical sage believed to have been born as the son of a king of Tazik (sTag gzig), the holy land to the west of Tibet. He received the tantric teachings from Chimé Tsukpü (see Chapter One). While Takla Mebar undertook to subdue the 'Female Arrogant Ones' (chief of whom was Sipé Gyalmo, see Chapter Three), Sangwa Düpa brought the 'Male Arrogant Ones' under his sway and compelled them to swear an oath to become 'Protectors of Bon'.[11] Sangwa Düpa does not seem to have a fierce form.

One of the Six Subduing Shen (see Chapter One) is also called Sangwa Düpa. His appearance is that of a peaceful Enlightened Being, and his colour is normally yellow (alternatively it may be blue). Of the six realms of rebirth, he is associated with that of humans. It is not clear whether he has any connection with the *siddha* bearing the same name. It is also not clear what relationship, if any, he has to the Buddhist tutelary deity bearing the same name (Sanskrit: Guhyasamāja).

Zangsa Ringtsün (Plate 41)

Zangsa Ringtsün (bZang za ring btsun), 'Auspicious Lady, Noble One of Long Life', is a manifestation of Satrig Ersang (see Chapter One). She was born as a semi-divine being in the abode of the Thirty-three Gods, situated on the summit of Meru, the mountain forming the centre of our world. Her miraculous appearance is described in the following passage from a Bonpo Tantra, in which her name, too, is explained:[12]

In the pleasant park with beautiful flowers
Of the abode of the Thirty-three Gods,
From the essence of the elements of the nine heavens,
In the ocean which swirls around the nine continents,
A turquoise egg, emitting light, appeared.
The egg was pierced by its own inner force,
And a beautiful, noble female form appeared,
Possessing divine marks and signs,
Effulgent with the light of the sun and the rays of the moon,
Emitting the five colours of the rainbow in the ten directions.
The Supernatural King of Primal Existence
Conferred upon that lady a name:
This lady, possessing the marks of a deity,
Being without passion and greed,
Is an auspicious lady (bzang za)*;*
Also, since she will remain for a long time
As a teacher guiding sentient beings,
She is 'the Long(-remaining) (ring)*, Noble One* (btsun)*';*
Therefore she is called Zangsa Ringtsün.

Zangsa Ringtsün is also important because she gives birth to Chimé Tsukpü, the teacher of Tantras who in his subsequent birth became the Teacher Shenrap.

Her attributes are a golden vase held in her right hand and a golden rosary raised in her left hand, level with her head. (The bronze reproduced on Plate 41 has other attributes, however).

Drenpa Namkha (Plates 42, 43 and 44)

Drenpa Namkha (Dran pa nam mkha'), 'Recollection-Sky', is beyond doubt the most important and, in some respects, complex figure in the history of Bon during the reign of the great Tibetan kings. He is, above all, the chief protagonist of Bon during the eighth century in the bitter struggle with the Buddhist faith, introduced into Tibet under royal patronage; when Bon finally fell out of favour with the king of Tibet, Drenpa Namkha allowed himself to be converted to the new faith. According to the historical tradition of the Bonpos, he did so with an impressive gesture: he cut off his hair himself, in imitation of Buddha Śākyamuni, and then proceeded to ordain himself, scornfully refusing the assistance of the Buddhist monks and justifying his action by stating that Bon and Buddhism are distinct only on the plane of relative truth.[13]

There can be little doubt as to the historical reality of Drenpa Namkha. He is also mentioned in Buddhist sources.[14] His family name is Khöpung (Khod spungs), and he is often referred to simply as *lachen* (*bla chen*), 'the Great Lama (i.e. Preceptor)', or, with a Zhangzhung term, *gyerpung* (*gyer spungs*), 'Teacher of Bon'. According to the tradition of Bon, Drenpa Namkha is the father of another important sage, Tsewang Rigzin (Tshe dbang rig 'dzin), to whom he transmitted Tantric teachings.[15] In addition, a strong (but not universally accepted) tradition asserts that Drenpa Namkha was also the father of Padmasambhava.[16]

Bonpo histories maintain that Drenpa Namkha was active during the reign of King Mutri Tsenpo (Mu khri btsan po), the son of the first king of Tibet, Nyatri Tsenpo (gNya' khri btsan po). Having obtained the power of extending his life-span beyond normal human limits, he was able to ensure, many centuries later, that the sacred texts of Bon were hidden away when Bon was suppressed by King Trisong Detsen (Khri srong lde btsan) in the eighth century. At this time he prophesied that the texts would be rediscovered as 'treasures', *terma* (*gter ma*), by specially chosen individuals at appropriate times in the future.

As the *siddha* chiefly responsible for hiding 'treasures', Drenpa Namkha clearly has traits in common with the Buddhist—and, more specifcally, Nyingmapa—figure Padmasambhava, and—again like Padmasambhava—he became the object of a cult. There exists a vast literature in Tibet related to Drenpa Namkha,[17] including a biography in eight volumes brought to light by the 'treasure-discoverer' Sangngak Lingpa (gSang sngags gling pa, b. 1864), a native of Nyarong.[18]

There are various manifestations of Drenpa Namkha. He may be portrayed in a tranquil form, seated in the posture of meditation and wearing the robes of a monk; more often, he sits in a relaxed posture, richly attired and holding his characteristic attributes, a staff surmounted by a swastika in his right hand and a skull-cup in his left. He also has a wrathful form in which he manifests himself as a *yidam* embraced by his consort (as on Plate 29); in this form, too, he can be identified by the attributes mentioned above.

Tsewang Rigzin

As we have seen, Tsewang Rigzin (Tshe dbang rig 'dzin), 'Knowledge-holder, Master of Long Life', is believed to be the son of Drenpa Namkha, and is regarded as a manifestation of Sangwa Düpa.[19] His teachings, rituals and iconographic representations are grouped in three different traditions: 'According to the Tradition of Zhangzhung', *Zhangzhungma* (*Zhang zhung ma*), 'According to the Tradition of India', *Gyagarma* (*rGya gar ma*), and 'According to the Tradition of Tibet', *Pöyülma* (*Bod yul ma*).

Tsewang Rigzin is portrayed seated in a relaxed posture, holding a flaming jewel in his right hand and a skull bowl in his left hand. He is flanked by his consort, Nyima Wöbar (Nyi ma 'od 'bar), 'Light-radiating Sun', who holds a chopper in her right hand and a skull bowl in her left.[20]

Lishu Taring (Plates 45 and 46)

Another *siddha*, a contemporary of Drenpa Namkha, is Nyachen Lishu Taring (sNya chen Li shu stag ring). Like other sages, he is believed to have been able to extend his life-span by supernatural means, and thus remain in the human world for more than two thousand years. He is said to have gone to Zhangzhung as well as to Tazik several times in order to obtain sacred texts, which he translated into Tibetan. When Bon was proscribed in Tibet by king Trisong Detsen, he left the country, but not before he had cursed the king and prophesied the ruin of the dynasty and of Tibet. Like Drenpa Namkha, Lishu Taring also concealed sacred texts for the benefit of future generations. According to the chronological calculations of the Bonpo scholar Nyima Tenzin (Nyi ma bstan 'dzin, b. 1813), this event took place in 749.[21]

In the same way as Drenpa Namkha and other sages, he may be portrayed either alone or together with his consort, the *ḍākinī* Nyibarma (Nyi 'bar ma)[22], and he has a tranquil as well as a wrathful mode of manifestation.

A great number of other *siddhas* are to be found in the iconographic heritage of Bon. As in Tibetan Buddhist art, they may be shown in various postures of yoga, but also seated tranquilly in meditation, or in the act of performing rites of tantric magic (Plate 47).

Dakinis (Plate 48)

There are numerous *ḍākinīs*. In spite of their semi-divine nature, most of them manifest themselves in human form as beautiful young women, usually portrayed in dancing postures. However, historical figures may also be regarded as *ḍākinīs*. Such female sages and magicians are particularly powerful, fully endowed with all kinds of superhuman capacities. Frequently they are the consorts of male *siddhas*, but some women have an independent and highly respected status. Thus Chosa Bönmo (Co za bon mo), who lived in the eighth century, "tied three knots in a sword", and at one point during the religious struggles during the reign of King Trisong Detsen, it was she who was appointed by the king to attempt to achieve a reconciliation with the Bonpo priests.[23]

Lamas (Plate 49)

Many thangkas include monks, yogins or other religious personages. Occasionally they are shown as numerous figures, representing the entire lineage of transmission of certain teachings (Plates 12, 16 and 18). More often, however, a single or a small number of monks (sometimes flanked by laymen and laywomen) occupy a more subordinate position, for example one part of the bottom row (Plates 8, 9, 26, 27, 31 and 38). In this case, they may be regarded as the monks who commissioned or consecrated the thangka. In other cases (Plates 28, 30 and 39), a deity is flanked by two or more monks, who have a particularly close relationship to the deity in question, or who are generally revered as teachers or founders of monasteries.

A few thangkas have a single monk as the central figure (Plate 49, cf. also Plate 50), usually surrounded by other, smaller figures of monks belonging to the same spiritual lineage or succession of abbots, as the case may be.

Bonpo monks can generally be recognized by the characteristic 'lotus hat', *pesha* (*pad zhva*) and other articles of dress and equipment mentioned in connection with Tritsug Gyalwa (Chapter One).



Plate 37
Takla Mebar
Tibet
Photo: Tenzin Wangyal

Takla Mebar is standing in the usual posture of a fierce deity, with one leg bent and the other stretched out. He holds his two characteristic attributes: in his right hand a wheel, and in his left, nine crossed swords. In this bronze, the two attributes give the impression of being more recent than the actual body of the statue, and may have been added as replacements of the originals. The colour of the face and the nine swords has been added later.

Plate 38

Takla Mebar

V. d. W. Collection
46 x 54 cm.

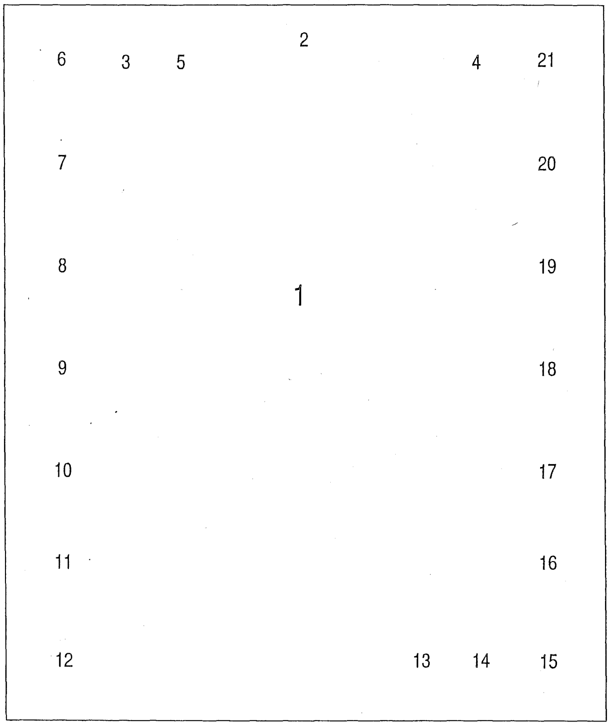


Fig. 7

Takla Mebar is portrayed standing on a lotus throne supported by four lions. He has assumed the aspect known as 'Red Razor Takla, Wearing a Tiger-skin', Takla Putri Marpo Takki Lagpachen (sTag la spu gri dmar po stag gi slag pa can) (1). He is shown dressed in a tiger-skin (*stag gi slag pa*), or perhaps two skins, behind which is the flayed hide of a demon. As attributes he holds a wheel in his right hand and a single sword in his left.

Immediately above his head is Tönpa Shenrap (2). The remainder of the thangka is filled with the following figures (Fig. 7):

3 White Razor Takla (sTag la spu gri dkar po).
4 Black Razor Takla (sTag la spu gri nag po).

Thus all three forms of Takla—'White', 'Red' and 'Black'—are depicted.

5-22 The Eighteen Haughty Ones, Dregpa Chogyé (Dregs pa bco brgyad): (5) the 'Haughty One' of gods (*lha*), (6) of *nyen* (*gnyan*), (7) of *lu* (*klu*), (8) of 'country gods', *yül-lha* (*yul lha*), (9) of demons, *dü* (*bdud*), (10) of *tsen* (*btsan*), (11) of *mu* (*dmu*), (12) of 'kings', *gyalpo* (*rgyal po*), (13) of *ging* (*ging*), (14) of 'lords of death', *shinje* (*gshin rje*), (15) of 'masters of the ground', *sadag* (*sa bdag*), (16) of 'mothers', *mamo* (*ma mo*), (17) of 'inferior demons', *madü* (*ma bdud*), (18) of *gongpo* (*'gong po*), (19) of *te'urang* (*the'u rang*), (20) of *yülsa* (*yul sa*), (21) of 'servants', *leché* (*las byed*) and (22) of 'officers', *lekhen* (*las mkhan*).

In the bottom row two monks flank a table laden with offerings. There is a partially effaced inscription on the back of the thangka, consisting of mantras, as well as series of swastikas, turning anti-clockwise according to the Bonpo fashion.



Plate 39

Takla Mebar

V. d. W. Collection

61.5 x 96.5 cm.

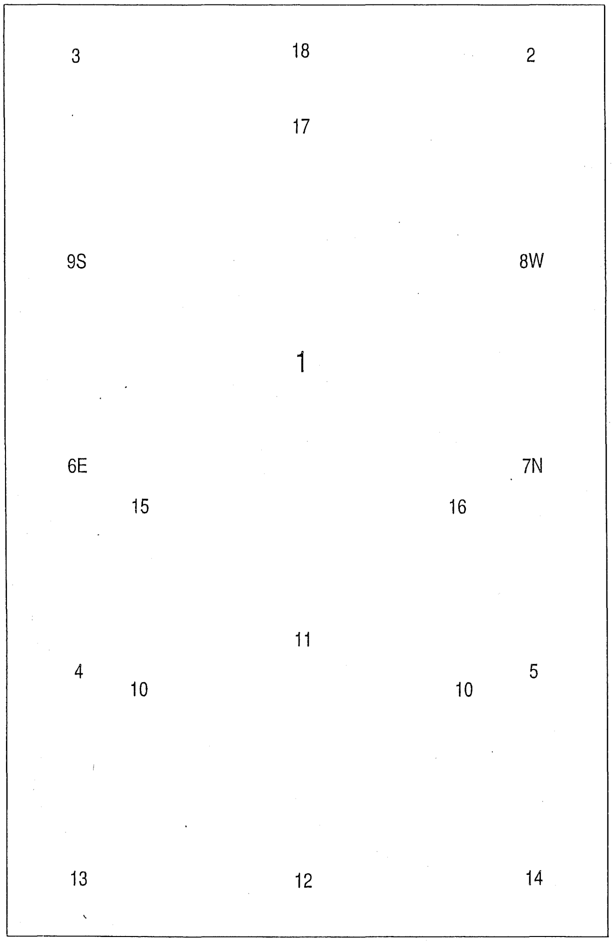


Fig. 8

The central figure is 'Red Razor Takla', Takla Putri Marpo (sTag la spu gri dmar po), holding his two characteristic attributes: in his right hand a wheel (attached in this case to a handle) and nine crossed swords (1).

Among the various groups of deities found in the thangka (cf. Fig. 8), the first group of four form, together with the central figure, the five-fold manifestation of Takla:

2 'Black Razor Takla' (sTag la spu gri nag po)

3 'White Razor Takla, Wearing Golden Armour' (sTag la spu gri dkar po gser khrab can), together with his entourage of four similarly attired manifestations.

4 'Piercing Bon, Red Blood-face' (dBal bon khrag gdong dmar po)

5 'Officer, Red Blood-face' (Las mkhan khrag gdong dmar po)

FOUR GROUPS OF DEMONIC BEINGS:

6 *east*: the host of *drisa* (*dri za*)

7 *north*: the host of *nöjin* (*gnod sbyin*)

8 *west*: the host of *luwang* (*klu dbang*)

9 *south*: the host of *shinjé* (*gshin rje*)

OTHER DEMONIC BEINGS:

10 The Eighteen Haughty Ones, Dregpa Chogye (Dregs pa bco brgyad); these are also included in the thangka on Plate 38.

PROTECTORS OF THE DOCTRINE:

11 'Red Tiger-face', Takdong Marpo (sTag gdong dmar po)

12 'The Messenger, Dark-red Demon of Emptiness', Ponya Tongdü Marnag (Pho nya sTong bdud dmar nag)[24]

13 'Cliff-*tsen*', Dragtsen (Brag btsan)

14 'Queen of the Created World', Sipé Gyalmo (Srid pa'i rgyal mo)

OTHER DEITIES:

15 Sangtra yabyum (gSang khra yab yum)

16 'The Pellucid Goddess', Dangmé lhamo (Dvangs ma'i lha mo)

17 'The White Lion of Speech', Maseng Karpo (sMra seng dkar po)

18 Gyalwa Düpa (rGyal ba 'dus pa), flanked by four lamas.

On the back of the thangka is written the name of the deity, Taklha (sTag lha, *sic*).[25]





Plate 40
Sangwa Düpa
Postel Collection
Height: 19 cm.
Photo: Michel Postel

Plate 41 (*opposite*)
Zangsa Ringtsün
V. d. W. Collection
Height: 20.6 cm.

The slightly obese figure of the sage Sangwa Düpa is sitting at ease in the posture of a *siddha*. In his right hand he brandishes a sword, and in his left, a bow and arrow.

Encircling the base of the statue is an inscription: "Om svāsti! Homage to the priest Sangwa Düpa! It (i.e. the statue) has been made for the benefit of the mother of the lay patron Pönmug Kumché (dPon rmug rkum che). May she be reborn in (the divine realm of) Dewachen (bDe ba can)!"[26]

This bronze belongs to the same set as the bronze portraying Satrig Ersang, Plate 2. In her left hand the goddess holds a cup; it is possible that she holds a rosary in her right hand. Her throne, like that of Satrig Ersang, is supported by lions.

At the base of the statue there is an inscription at the front: "Homage to the Mother, Zangsa Ringtsün (in her) bodily form!" At the back there is an inscription which reads: "May the pious aspiration of Tazhi Tsültrim be fulfilled !"[27]





Plate 42
Drenpa Namkha
Private Collection
Photo: Per Kværne
(also in Karmay 1972: frontispiece)

This bronze portrays the great sage Drenpa Namkha, seated in meditation, his right hand pointing towards the ground in the gesture of enlightenment, his left hand resting on his lap. His long hair, bound up in a top-knot, indicates that he is portrayed before his conversion to Buddhism, as he is reported to have cut off his hair with his own hands at his ordination.



Plate 43
Drenpa Namkha
Detail of thangka, Tibet
Photo: Per Kværne

A detail of a thangka on which several *siddhas* are portrayed shows Drenpa Namkha seated in a cave with three attendants. He is seated in the relaxed posture of a prince or a yogin and holds two characteristic attributes: in his right hand a swastika, and in his left, a skull-cup. In front is a variety of offerings and the inscription: "The great Lama Drenpa, of brilliant mental profundity".[28]



Plate 44
Drenpa Namkha
Postel Collection
Height: 22 cm.
Photo: Michel Postel

Drenpa Namkha is portrayed sitting in a relaxed posture, wearing the crown, jewels and loin-cloth of a prince or a yogin. He holds his two characteristic attributes: a parasol surmounted by a swastika in his right hand and a skull-cup in his left.

Along the left front half of the base of the statue there is an inscription: "Oṃ svāsti! Homage to the great lama Drenpa Namkha!"[29]

Plate 45.1-2
Lishu Taring
Tsakli, Tibet
Photo: Charles Ramble

Both *tsakli* show Lishu Taring and his consort Nyibarma. Plate 45.1 (*left*) portrays Lishu Taring dressed in rich robes and wearing a hat which appears to be made of tiger-skin. He holds a skull-bowl and a trident. His consort Nyibarma is shown as a naked *ḍākinī* wearing a crown and jewels. In Plate 45.2 (*right*) he is portrayed as a fierce deity holding a swastika in his right hand and a trident in his left; he is embraced by his consort. The inscription states: "Lishu Father-Mother" (*Li shu yab yum*), i.e. Lishu envisaged as a tutelary deity with his consort.





Plate 46
Lishu Taring
Detail of thangka (Plate 17) , Tibet
Photo: Per Kværne

In the centre of the section of a thangka reproduced here is seated Lishu Taring portrayed as a youthful figure, wearing rich, loose robes and the white hat, surmounted by three vultures' feathers, of a tantric adept. He is flanked by his consort. Below his seart is the following inscription: "Lord Lishu, the essence of the Enlightened Ones of the thousand aeons" (*bskal stong sangs rgyas ngo bo Li shu rje*). In the space above his head are five dancing *ḍākinīs*. Forming a semi-circle around him are several groups of sages, identified by inscriptions, from the upper left moving down and towards the right: 'the Six Scholars of Tazig', 'the Three Scholars of Tibet', 'the Four Scholars of Zhangzhung' and 'the Five *siddhas* of India'. On the outer edge are four standing figures representing the Goddesses of the Four Seasons: to the left: Shakma (Zhags ma), red, holding a noose, and Cagdrogma (lCag sgrog ma), white, holding an iron chain; to the right: Shangroma (Shang ro ma), green, holding a *shang*, and Cakkyuma (lCag kyu ma), yellow, holding a hook.





Plate 47
Namra Tseku
Detail of thangka, Tibet
Photo: Per Kværne

Namra Tseku is one of 'the Six Great Ornaments Who Remove the Mental Darkness of Living Beings' and who, according to the tradition of Bon, was active before the Tibetan king Lhato Tori, during whose reign (5th-6th century) the first contacts with Buddhism are reported in Tibetan sources to have taken place. He is dressed in the blue robes of a tantric magician, holding a ritual dagger, *purpa* (*phur pa*), in his right hand and a ritual bell, *shang* (*gshang*), in his left. In front of him is a large ritual structure, a *dö* (*mdos*), which has many functions, among which is that of expelling demons as well as representing offerings to the gods.[31]



Plate 48
Chosa Bönmo
Tsakli, Tibet
Photo: Charles Ramble

Chosa Bönmo, a historical figure of the eighth century, renowned for her supernatural powers, is portrayed in this *tsakli* as a *ḍākinī* striking a dancing posture and holding a trident, dressed in a loin-cloth and wearing jewels and a crown.

Plate 49

Namkha Lodrö (b.1891)

Tibet

Photo: Per Kværne

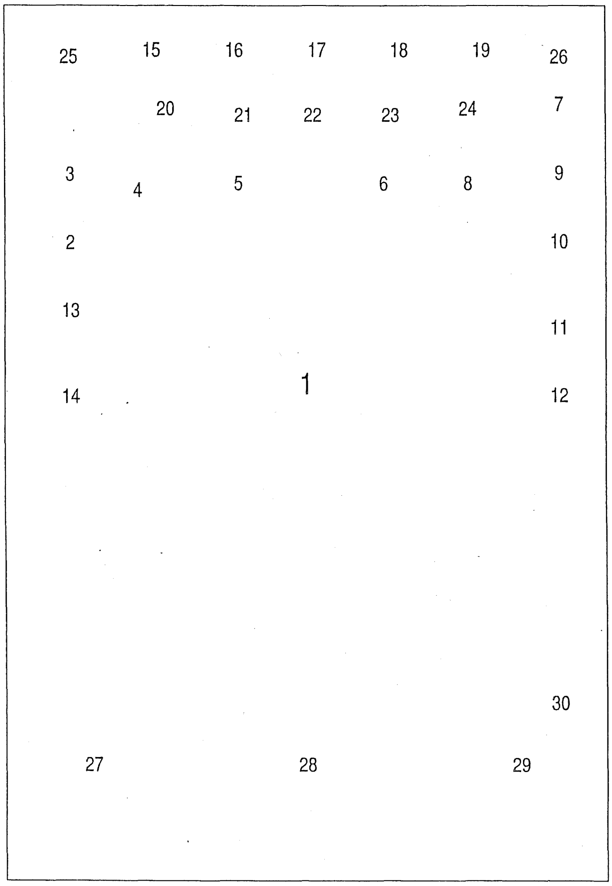


Fig. 9

The central figure in this thangka, which may have been painted around the middle of this century, is Namkha Lodrö (Nam mkha' blo gros), a lama of the Chaphur (Bya 'phur) lineage in the Ngaba (rNga ba) district in the southern part of Amdo, and abbot of the monastery of Nangshig (sNang zhig). He was born in 1891.[31] He is surrounded by a number of figures, some of whom are sages from the time of conflict with Buddhism during the reign of king Trisong Detsen in the eighth century, while others are monks and scholars of importance in the later tradition of Bon. Some can be identified as belonging to the same monastic lineage at Nangshig, and we may assume that all are regarded as part of the spiritual lineage of the main figure. The figures are identified by inscriptions, some of which are, however, no longer legible. The names of figures not accompanied by inscriptions are placed in parentheses.

1 Namkha Lodrö (Nam mkha' blo gros), b. 1891.

Eighth century sages:

2 Tonggyung Tuchen (sTong rgyung mthu chen).[32]
3 Shari Wuchen (Sha ri dbu chen).
4 Limur Tsugpü (Li mur gtsug phud).[33]
5 Inscription effaced.
6 Inscription effaced.
7 Senega'u (Sad ne ga'u).[34]

Lamas belonging to the monastic tradition:

8 Yorpo Mepal (Yor po Me dpal), 1134-68.
9 Asha Lodrö Gyaltsen ('A zha Blo gros rgyal mtshan), 1198-1263.
10 Sönam Yungdrung (bSod nams g.yung drung), active 1575.
11 Yungdrung Tsültrim (g.Yung drung tshul khrims), active 1706.
12 Sönam Lodrö (bSod nams blo gros), b. 1784.
13 Nyima Tenzin (Nyi ma bstan 'dzin), b. 1813.
14 Yungdrung Tenpa Rapgyé (g.Yung drung bstan pa rab rgyas).

All the lamas are dressed in monastic robes and wear the 'lotus hat', *pesha* (*pad zhva*), of a fully ordained monk.

Deities, sages and monks:

15 Tönpa Shenrap (sTon pa gShen rab).
16 (Maseng (sMra seng)).[35]
17 Kuntu Zangpo (Kun tu bzang po)
18 Chimé Tsukpü ('Chi med gtsug phud)
19 Yangchenma (dByangs can ma)
20 Inscription effaced
21 Lhabön Khyappa Nangden (Lha bon Khyab pa snang ldan).
22 Nyammé Sherap Gyaltsen (mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan), 1356-1415.[36]
23 Yikyi Khye'uchung (Yid kyi khye'u chung).[37]
24 Lubön (Klu bon).
25 Inscription effaced
26 (Purpa (Phur pa))
27 (Sigyal Drelmar (Srid rgyal drel dmar).[38]
28 (Namtösé (rNam thos sras)).[39]
29 Dragtsen (Brag btsan).[40]
30 Genyen (dGe bsnyen). This deity is the special protector of Nangshig Monastery.[41]



Chapter 4 Notes

1 Hoffmann 1950: 308 n.2 refers to "Der bekannte Tiger-Dämon der Bon-po". Waddell 1959: 519-520 speaks of "*Tag-mar*, the Red Tiger-devil of the pre-Lamaist Bön priests". The form *sTag lha* is found in Buddhist sources, cf. Hoffmann 1950: 260.

2 Taklha (sTag lha) is, however, also occasionally found in Bonpo sources; thus, it is inscribed on the backside of the thangka reproduced on Plate 39.

3 Volf 1994: 202.

4 Karmay 1972: 46 (n. 2).

5 Obviously the Indian demon Daśagrīva, the foe of Rāma in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

6 Karmay 1972: xxii; Karmay 1975b: 199.

7 On Purpa, cf. Karmay 1972: 45 n. 2 and Karmay 1975b: 198-200.

8 *sTag la spu gri dmar po'i phrin las tshig bshad so so'i mngon rtogs thugs rje'i rgyun 'byung*, pp.173-205 in: *sTag la spu gri dkar nag dmar gsum yang gsang bcud dril bcas kyi sgrub skor*, Vol.I, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Ochghat (India), 1973: 176-177.

9 *Ma ṭam* is the name of a class of demons. The term *ma ṭam* is certainly a loan-word in Tibetan, probably from Sanskrit, perhaps a form of Sanskrit *maṭaka* (from *mṛta*), 'dead, a corpse'.

10 *sTag la spu gri dmar po'i mngon rtogs*, pp.207-220 in: *sTag la spu gri dkar nag dmar gsum* (cf. note 8 above): 212.

11 Karmay 1972: xxi.

12 Quotation in the *Legs bshad rin po che'i gter mdzod*, Beijing (Mi rigs dpe skrun khang) 1985: 75 from the *rTsa rgyud nyi zer sgron ma*.

13 On Drenpa Namkha, cf. Karmay 1972: xxxii n. 4 and 90-95; Blondeau 1985; Namkhai Norbu 1989: 121-123. His ordination is described in Karmay 1972: 90-91.

14 Hoffmann 1950: 260.

15 Blondeau 1985.

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*

18 Cf. Kværne 1971: 239.

19 On Tsewang Rigzin, cf. Blondeau 1985.

20 Cf. "Further Visual Sources", Tsewang Rigzin.

21 On Lishu Taring, cf. Karmay 1972 (see "Indexes") and Kværne 1971: 227.

22 Note the almost identical form of this name and the name of the consort of Tsewang Rigzin.

23 Karmay 1972: 100.

24 Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 275 mentions "the Bon god *sTong bdud dmar po* or *sTong bdud 'chi bdag*, depicted—in spite of the word *dmar po*, "red", in the first name—as a black deity". This is also the case in the present thangka.

25 Cf. note 2 above.

26 "oṃ svo ti (*sic, for* svāsti) gshen rabs gSang ba 'dus pa la na mo (/) yon gyi dag (*sic*) po dPon rmug rkum che kyi yum gyi don du zhengs de (*sic*) ba can du skye bar shog// bkra shis// rig byed rkon na ? ma yin//". For Buddhists, Dewachen (bDe ba can) translates Sanskrit Sukhāvati, the paradise ('Buddha-field') over which the Buddha Amitābha presides in the west.

27 Front: "yum Zang dzang Rig tsun (*sic*) sku la na mo/" Back: "mTha' bzhi Tshul khrim(s ?) thugs rgong sdzog (*sic*) pa gyur cig/".

28 "Bla chen Dran pa thugs dgongs gsal".

29 "Om sva ti/ Bla chen Draw pa naw (*sic*) mkha' la na mo//".

30 Cf. Blondeau 1990.

31 Cf. Kværne 1990b:215.

32 Zhangzhung *siddha*, cf. Karmay 1972:72.

33 Zhangzhung *siddha*, cf. Karmay 1972:163.

34 Zhangzhung *siddha*, cf. Karmay 1972:47.

35 'Lion of Speech', cf. Ch. 1.

36 Cf. Chapter Five (Plate 50).

37 One of 'the Four Excellent Youths', cf. Chapter One, note 36.

38 Reproduced as Plate 33.

39 Namtösé (rNam thos sras, Sanskrit Vaiśravaṇa), god of riches, cf. Stein 1959: 263 ff.

40 Reproduced as Plate 35.

41 On protective deities known as *genyen*, 'lay supporter', cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 160 ff. They must not be confused with the peaceful deity Genyen, one of the 'Twelve Rituals'. cf. p. 36.

CHAPTER FIVE

Narrative Thangkas

In the traditional society of Tibet, illiteracy was widespread. This does not, however, mean that ordinary Tibetans were cut off from acquiring a broad knowledge of their cultural and religious heritage. One of the mediums through which such knowledge was transmitted, was—and still is—visual art: temple frescoes, illuminated manuscripts, block-prints, thangkas and statues.

A special type of thangkas are paintings which depict a continuous story. The pedagogical function of such thangkas is obvious. In Buddhist art, the former lives of Buddha Śākyamuni are a favourite theme, as well as the lives of saints such as Padmasambhava, Milarepa, Tsongkhapa and others. An entire story or biography may be contained within a single thangka, or unfold through a series of thangkas forming a set. The visual representation is often based on a specific literary text, and may or may not have explanatory captions. The scenes may be strictly organized within boxes (as in a Western comic-strip), or distributed on the surface of the thangka in a less rigid fashion.

Narrative thangkas are also well represented in Bonpo art. The majority depict the life of Tönpa Shenrap, but examples of other biographical narratives on

Plate 50
This thangka–painted around the middle of this century–illustrates the biography of the great scholar and organiser of the monastic tradition of Bon, Nyamé ('the Peerless') Sherap Gyaltsen (1356-1415). A native of the district of Gyarong, he travelled to Central Tibet in order to study. In 1405 he founded the monastery of Menri (sMan ri) still regarded by Bonpos as the most prestigious centre of the monastic life of their religion.



thangkas exist, as for instance the life of Nyamé ('the Peerless') Sherap Gyaltsen (1356-1415), the great scholar and organizer of the monastic life of Bon (Plate 50).[1]

Several sets of thangkas depicting the life of Tönpa Shenrap are known. These thangkas normally seem to come in sets of twelve. While some sets are based on the biography of Tönpa Shenrap as found in the *Zermig*, the medium-length version in two volumes dating, possibly, from the eleventh century,[2] the majority are based on the *Ziji*, the long version in twelve volumes, dating from the fourteenth century. One such set—unfortunately incomplete, as two of the twelve thangkas are missing—has been published and described in detail.[3]

In the present volume, a thangka, the first of a set of twelve, is reproduced (Plate 51), as well as sections of other thangkas from the same set. This set, which is complete, is preserved in a monastery in eastern Tibet. The scenes depicted on the thangkas illustrate the biography of Tönpa Shenrap as related in the *Ziji*. I was informed that it had been commissioned by one of the Bonpo kings of Gyarong in the eighteenth century; this would imply that it dates from before the devastating Chinese campaign of 1771-76. In the course of this campaign, imperial armies, after overcoming fierce resistance, brought Gyarong under Chinese rule, extinguishing the remarkable culture that flourished there in the eighteenth century.[4]

The first thangka of the set (Plate 51) illustrates the birth of Tönpa Shenrap and his early years as prince in the kingdom of Wölmo Lungring.[5] Among the scenes depicted on this thangka, several can be clearly identified. In the upper left-hand corner, the future Teacher of the World, the divine youth Chimé Tsukpü, requests the blessings of Shenlha Wökar and Sangpo Bumtri before being reborn among humans in the land of Wölmo Lungring. In the centre of the upper part of the thangka he is seen descending through the upper atmospheric realms, surrounded by gods, before reaching the summit of Mount Meru, the mountain in the centre of our world. He continues his descent to the southern slope of the mountain, where he takes the form of the god Tamdin (Sanskrit Hayagrīva), the 'Horse-necked One', and forces the gods and titans to swear to protect the teachings of Bon. This is shown below and slightly to the left of the former scene.

In the upper right-hand corner can be seen the palace of the king and queen of Wölmo Lungring. In a small room to the right can be seen the birth of the Teacher, while in the central part of the palace he is subsequently presented to the king while brahmins, seated in the courtyard in front, give the prince a name.

In the lower, left-hand section of the thangka the Prince of Demons, who is to remain the arch-rival of Tönpa Shenrap throughout the greater part of the life of the latter, attacks the young prince and his companions while they are playing in the forest and enjoying (as the *Ziji* informs us) fruit, milk and beer. The demon appears slightly below the prince who remains seated serenely, while above him, to the left, one hundred *drapla*, created by his supernatural power, sally forth. The divine warriors wear armour and brandish their weapons, and without difficulty they repulse the prince of demons and his hosts.

After being in due course enthroned as king, Tönpa Shenrap teaches the Doctrine of Bon in Wölmo Lungring. Thereafter he sets out on a series of journeys to various other kingdoms, the purpose always being to save a notorious sinner from rebirth in hell, chiefly by means of appropriate rituals. In this way, Tönpa Shenrap becomes the source of authority and legitimation for the doctrines as well as the ritual practices of the Bonpos. He is invariably depicted journeying in his



Plate 51

royal chariot, "the chariot with eight wheels" as the *Ziji* asserts (the thangkas of this set, however, do not show more than four wheels), surrounded by his entourage of courtiers and disciples, and met by the inhabitants of the country carrying offerings and playing various musical instruments (Plate 52).

He also acquires an increasing number of royal consorts, a princess being one of the standard gifts offered him at the successful conclusion of a soteriological exploit, and his queens as well as the numerous sons and daughters to whom they in the course of time give birth play an important role in the propagation of Bon. His sons in particular become his closest disciples. Two sections are shown from the sixth thangka of the series. They show, first (Plate 53), the queen Höza Gyalmé (Hos bza' rGyal med) seated inside a palace, holding the newly-born prince Chebu Trishé (dPyad bu khri shes), who is saluted by gods and humans; behind her a god, identified by an inscription as Brahmā (Tibetan Tsangpa, Tshangs pa), purifies the

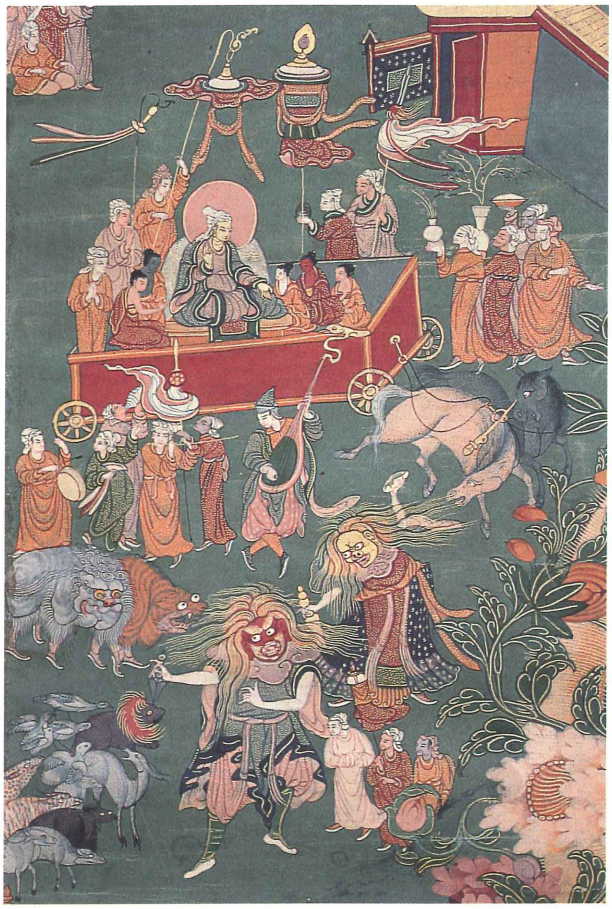


Plate 52

child by pouring consecrated water on him from a vase. The inscription states "Höza Gyalmé, having given birth to her son Chebu Trishé".[6] The second section (Plate 54) shows the young prince seated in front of Tönpa Shenrap: "The Teacher abolishes the doubts of Chebu Trishé and his entourage",[7] i.e. he imparts instruction in Bon.

Not all of Tönpa Shenrap's offspring were, however, devoted to religious pursuits. One of his daughters, Shenza Nechung (gShen bza' Ne'u chung), had a fickle and frivolous mind, and the Prince of Demons, Khyappa Laring, in the guise of a young and handsome prince, was able to seduce her. No sooner had she consented, however, than she was carried off to the 'Land of Darkness' of the demons and kept prisoner in the 'Iron Castle with a Hundred Doors'. Here she gave birth to twin sons, Tabutung (sTag bu thung) and Zibutung (gZig bu thung),[8] whose fierce and violent nature fully testified to their partly demonic parentage. Plate 55 shows the castle of the demons, decorated with skulls and guarded by armed demons keeping watch from every tower. Inside, we see the demonic twins in various scenes with their parents; they are so fierce that to keep them from tearing their mother apart, they have to be kept in chains. Tönpa Shenrap, however, hears the pitiful cries of his daughter, and flying through the air, lands in front of the gate of the castle. At first he is refused entry, but finally the Prince of Demons allows Shenza Nechung to come out to meet her father, but only on condition that she remains chained to the castle. Using his irresistible magic power, Tönpa Shenrap nevertheless enters the castle, the chains are loosened, and Shenza Nechung and her sons are safely extracted from the clutches of the demons and



Plate 53



Plate 54

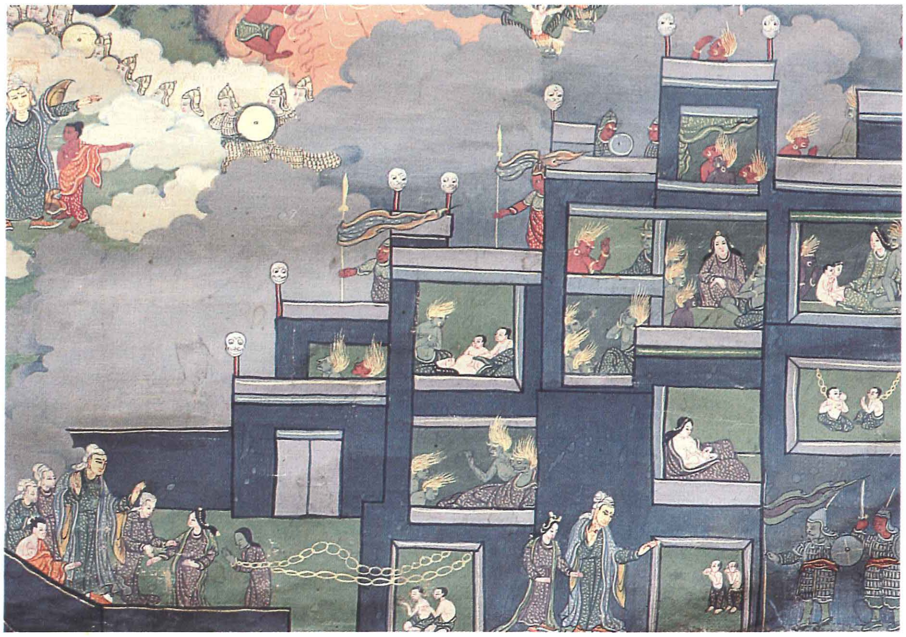


Plate 55

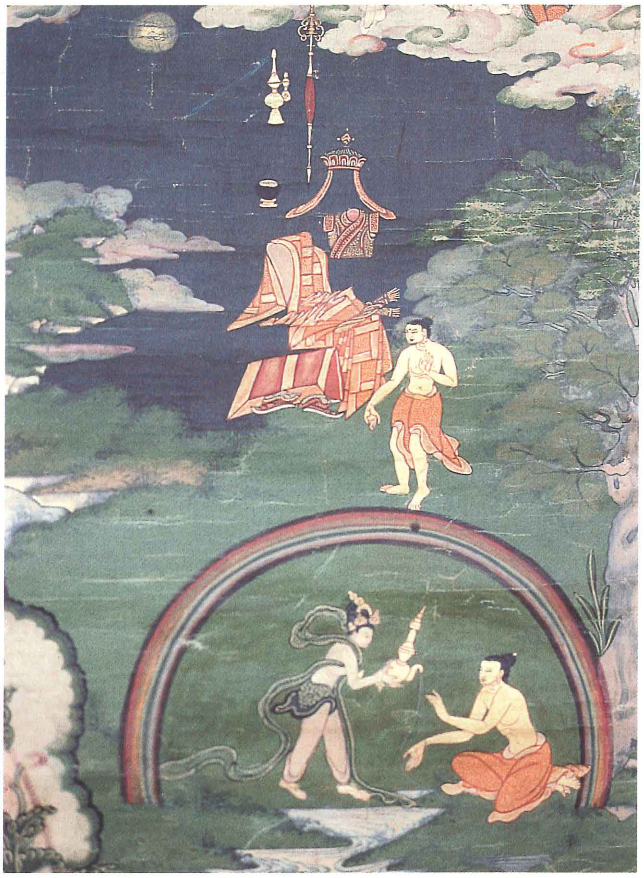


Plate 56



Plate 57

entrusted to one of the Teacher's chief disciples, who is given the task of imparting to them spiritual instruction. The demons, however, swear revenge, and many dramatic episodes ensue in which the Prince of Demons is able to cause much damage before being finally converted by the Teacher to a life of virtue.

After many years of ceaseless activity for the welfare of sentient beings, the Teacher decides to renounce worldy life and to take the vows of a monk. Having removed his crown, jewels and royal attire, the five objects which a monk is permitted to own (staff, razor, needle, jar and alms-bowl), as well as the robes and 'lotus-hat' of a monk, descend from heaven (Plate 56, upper part).[9] Exhorting his disciples to follow his example and take monastic vows, the Teacher shakes his body thrice and the robes are transformed into the wings of a *shangshang*, a creature which is half bird, half human, and soars up to the Womin ('Og min) heaven where he is respectfully received by the divine inhabitants (Plate 58).[10] By means of consecrated water he is purified (Plate 56, lower part) and given the name Tritsug Gyalwa (see Chapter One).

Finally, the Teacher descends to the world of humans once more, and in a beautiful park on the northwestern border of Wölmo Lungring he practises asceticism for a year (Plate 57). He is attended on by Khading Deu (mKha' lding lde'u), king of the *shangshang*, who daily brings him a single herb on which he subsists. Khading Deu can be seen seated in a tree to the right of the Teacher. Deeply moved by the hardships sustained by the Teacher, the demons are converted, including the Prince of Demons, Khyappa Laring; the demons are seen seated at the



Plate 58



Plate 59

foot of the tree. In the palace, his entourage is worried at the long absence of Tönpa Shenrap; his closest disciple, Yikyi Khye'uchung (Yid kyi khye'u chung), the 'Little Youth of the Mind', mounts the 'blue dragon-horse' and departs to find the Teacher. Finding him, he brings the entire entourage to the park to honour him with music and banners and present immense offerings. The dragon is seen to the right of the Teacher, and the four animals—tiger, yak, lion and elephant—which have drawn his chariot when he journeyed throughout the realms of the world, worship their master together with the rest of the entourage.

The *Ziji* does not relate the passing away of the Teacher. An account of this event is, however, found in the *Zermig*. Plate 59 reproduces an illumination from the Berlin ms. (cf. Chapter One) which shows, below, "the passing beyond sorrow (i.e. entering into nirvana) of the Teacher"; above, left, "the body of the Teacher resting inside a coffin"; and finally, to the right, "the (illusory) appearance of the Teacher as a corpse is consumed in the fire".[11]

CHAPTER 5 NOTES

1 On Nyamé (mNyam med) 'the Peerless' Sherap Gyaltsen, cf. Karmay 1972: 140-145 and Kværne 1991: 373-374.

2 Cf. Karmay 1975a: 562 n. 2.

3 The set belongs to the Musée Guimet, Paris, published and described in Kværne 1986, also in Béguin 1995: 475-480.

4 On this campaign, cf. Mansier 1990.

5 On Wölmo Lungring, cf. Karmay 1972: xxvii-xxxi.

6 "Hos bza' rGyal med la sras dPyad bu khri shes bltams pa".

7 "sTon pas dPyad bu khri shes 'khor bcas la the tshoms gcod pa'i bon gnang ba".

8 Their names signify 'Short Tiger-cub' and 'Short Leopard-cub'.

9 On the possessions and dress of a Bonpo monk, cf. Snellgrove 1967: 155-161 and 269-275.

10 For Buddhists, 'Og min translates Sanskrit Akaniṣṭha.

11 "sTon pa sku mya ngan las 'das pa'o//"; "sTon pa' dpur (*sic*) sgrom gyi nang na bzhugs pa'o//"; "sTon pa'i dpur snang ma zhugs pa la bzhen pa'o". *Zermig* ms., Waddell 1a, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin, Orientabteilung, fol. 248b.

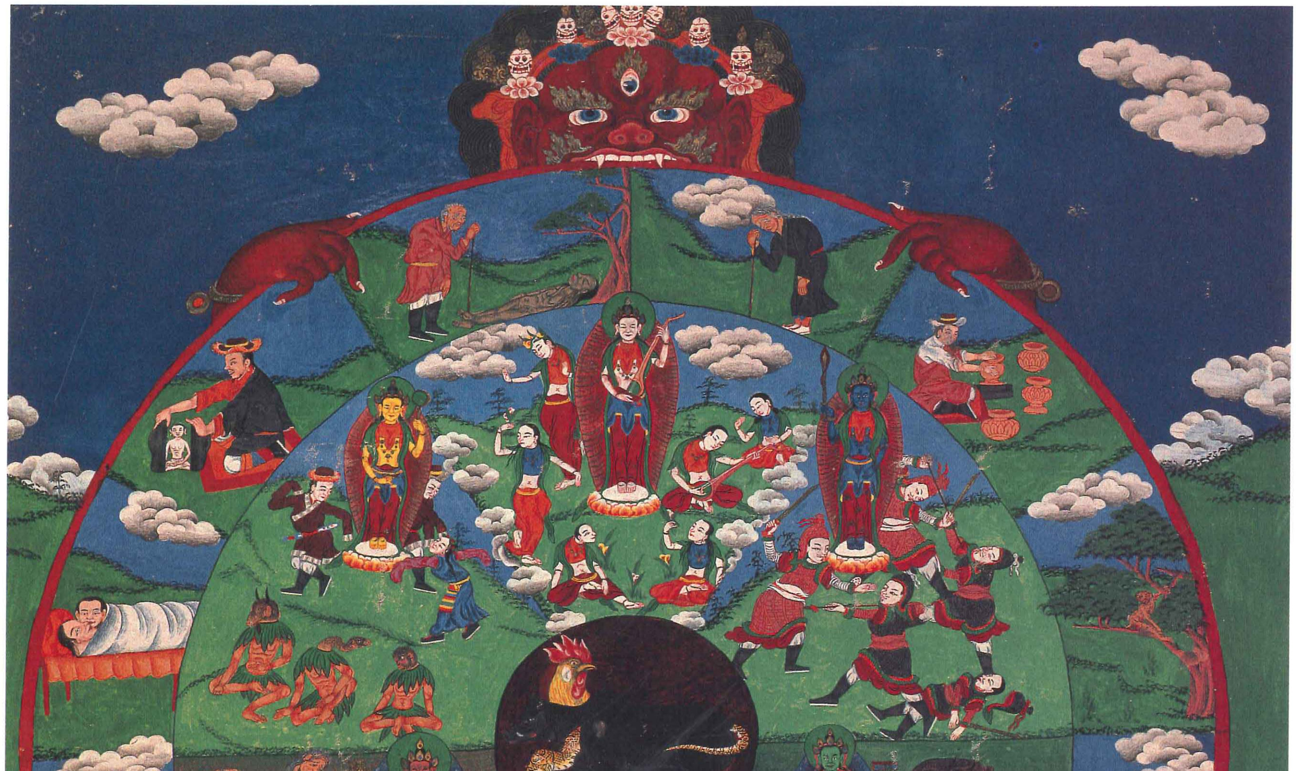


Plate 60

CHAPTER SIX

The Wheel of Existence

One of the standard subjects of Tibetan Buddhist iconography is the 'Wheel of Existence' (Sanskrit *bhavacakra*) illustrating the six realms of birth, death and rebirth of sentient beings. The Bonpos, too, have their own version of the 'Wheel of Existence'. Compared to the Buddhist *bhavacakra*, the basic lay-out of the Bonpo version is the familiar one, but numerous details differ. The Bonpo version thus provides a good example of the way in which Bon assimilates elements which are present in Tibetan culture as a whole, while retaining a considerable degree of freedom in utilising these elements according to its own religious concepts.

The origin of the Bonpo pictorial representation of the 'Wheel of Existence' supports this view. The painting reproduced here (Plate 60) was made in 1973 by the only Bonpo artist active in India at the time. It conforms to a short anonymous text, translated below, containing an explanation of the painting. Contemporary Tibetan Bonpo scholars affirm that it was only in the present century that the Bonpos actually created a pictorial 'Wheel of Existence' of their own; previously they simply used the Buddhist version. The elements constituting the Bonpo version are, however, found in the Bonpo Kanjur and are quoted in the text translated below. Thus the painting, based as it is on a Buddhist prototype—but only to the extent that scriptural justification can be found within the Bonpo religion itself—illustrates the characteristic faithfulness of Bon to its own scriptures and inner coherency, as well as its ability to assimilate new elements.

According to the text, the scriptural basis of the painting is chiefly to be found in three sources, the *Dzö* (*mDzod*), the *Trijé Lungten* (*Khri rje lung bstan*) and the *Ziji* (*gZi brjid*). The *Dzö* is quoted three times (and its commentary, the *Dradrel* (*sGra 'grel*), once); this is not surprising, as this text has a special status in Bon, being the basic systematic exposition of the various elements of the doctrine and placed as the second text of the Bonpo Kanjur. It was discovered as a 'treasure' on a least three different occasions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[1] The *Trijé Lungten* is a short text classed as a sutra; it, too, is a 'treasure' from the eleventh century.[2] The *Ziji* is the extended biography of Tönpa Shenrap in twelve volumes; it is a 'mentally revealed treasure', *gongter* (*dgongs gter*), from the fourteenth century.[3]

The text deals in turn with the three concentric circles of the 'Wheel of Existence', starting with the innermost one. Here we find not the familiar three animals of the Buddhist version, pig, cock and snake, but a single monstrous beast having the body of a cow, the tail of a snake and three heads: that of a cock, a pig and a snake. However, ample textual justification is adduced for this hybrid creature. The text quotes the eighth chapter of the *Dzö* which deals with the arising of the Three Poisons: the 'poison cow of *saṃsāra*' has three heads symbolizing the Three Poisons; from each of the three mouths proceed three classes of beings, nine

in all, ranging from gods to the denizens of hell. In the *Ziji* the same image of the cow is found in chapter 31; here it forms a part of a larger cosmological account of a kind familiar in Tibet, involving a 'white' and a 'black' light, a cosmic egg, etc. Part of this account is quoted by our text. The cow appears in this context as a demiurgic figure of a kind extremely common in Tibetan mythology, i.e. a being from whose body the world, or a significant part or aspect of the world, emanates. Besides *lu* (*klu*) and demons, *sinpo* (*srin po*), various animals are known to have such a function, e.g. the tiger, the toad, or—coming closer to the present image—the yak.[4]

The second circle shows, as one would expect, the six realms of existence. One may note that the upward and downward movement of beings, usually shown immediately next to the circle in the middle in the Buddhist 'Wheel of Existence', is missing in the painting as well as in the text, although it is hinted at in the *Trije Lungten* in a way that could have justified its inclusion. The painting, on the other hand, shows the Six Disciplining Shen, Dülwé Shen Drug ('Dul ba'i gshen drug), one in each of the six realms of existence (see Chapter One). Although the text does not mention them, scriptural justification could easily have been found.

Further we may note that the torments of hell are sharply divided into hot and cold, the otherwise familiar scenes of mutilation being absent: nor do we find the scene showing the judgement of the dead, which, it would seem, is never missing from the Buddhist 'Wheel of Existence'. In the lower part of the world of humans are seen three individuals clothed in leaves and having animal heads; they represent a class of semi-divine, semi-demoniacal beings known as *miamci*.[5]

The outer circle shows the twelve links in the chain of dependent origination. The first is in the upper right-hand sector of the circle, and the subsequent ones follow in clockwise sequence (not, it may be noted in passing, counter-clockwise as one might have expected in a Bonpo painting). This is in accordance with the usual Buddhist pattern, although one frequently also finds the first link (Sanskrit *nidāna*) in the lower left-hand sector.

A number of the links are illustrated in ways which are entirely different from those usually found in the Buddhist 'Wheel of Existence'. Without entering into the question of how these differences have arisen, it may nevertheless be of interest to quote the brief remarks concerning the representation, *pe* (*dpe*), of each link found in the commentary *Dradrel*:

1. Ignorance is shown as an old blind woman, as in Buddhist tradition. "It is like a blind old woman erring about, unable to see the path".
2. Predispositions are represented by a potter at work. "Material, tools and agent—these three being gathered together, perform".
3. Consciousness is a monkey climbing a tree. "Abandoning one sense-object or body, it grasps another".

   The first three links follow the conventions of the Buddhist 'Wheel of Existence'. In the remaining sectors, however, the scenes depicted are generally completely different from those found in Buddhist versions.
4. Name-and-form is represented by a pile of goods: the Buddhist symbol is a man being ferried across a river. "Name enjoys form as a lord enjoys his possessions".
5. The six sense-fields are represented by a mask of a human face. In Buddhist versions one finds an empty house or a group of houses. The Bonpo version is not an arbitrary innovation, however, as the fifth link is in fact symbolized by

a mask in the sixth-century 'Wheel of Existence' from Ajanta, no longer preserved but described by Waddell.[6] The intermediary stages linking the Indian and Bonpo versions are, however, not known. "In the one substance of the mask the five senses are complete".

6 Contact is shown by a snake crawling through a bamboo cane. Usually a man and a woman embracing are shown. "The sense-objects are like a snake; being of exactly the same size, they meet together (i.e. fit into each other)".

7 Sensation is illustrated by water being poured from a jar on red-hot iron. In Buddhist versions a man with an arrow in his eye is invariably shown. "It is like water being sprinkled on blazing red-hot iron".

8 Craving is symbolized by a man unable to find the door of a house. In the Buddhist 'Wheel of Existence' one always finds a picture of a man drinking or being served beer. "For example—like a prince who, not finding the door of his palace, wishes (to find) the door of his palace".

9 Grasping is symbolized by a turkey[7] drinking water. The Buddhist version shows the picking of fruit, usually by a monkey, but also by people; sometimes the monkey hands fruit to one or several persons standing at the foot of a tree. "As for the turkey drinking water—it is like taking water in close succession at every moment".

10 Existence is represented by a man and a woman in union. This may also be found in Buddhist versions, but more frequently they show a pregnant woman. " Male and female being the cause, they are taken as illustration".

11 Birth is shown by an image in the process of being cast. Buddhist paintings show a woman giving birth. "As for birth, the substance itself becoming manifest, it is like liquid stone being founded and becoming manifest as form".

12 Old age and death are illustrated as an old man and a naked corpse, "without the use of symbolism". In Buddhist versions, only a corpse is shown, wrapped up and being carried off by one or several men.

Now follows the translation of the short anonymous text referred to above.[8]

"An Illuminating Explanation of Phenomenal Existence in its Evolution and its Extinction.

Obeisance to the supreme Teacher Shenrap who, by means of the rays of Wisdom from the sun of the Mind-of-Enlightenment, imparts the instruction which utterly dries up the expanse of the ocean of suffering which is incomprehensible to the mind!

Phenomenal existence in its evolution produces only suffering; by the extinction thereof the state of liberation is obtained. Explaining the nature of Suchness, joy greatly increases in my mind.[9]

In this connection, there follows a brief explanation, based on the substance of the Scriptures, of the picture showing the round of birth and death as comprised by the twelve links of dependent origination, and a more detailed account of what the picture looks like.

First of all, the *Dzö* says:[10] "Saṃsāra, a poison cow, arose", and its commentary, the *Dradrel*, says:[11] "As for 'poison', it destroys the splendour of Knowledge and the flow of Bliss; as for 'cow' (*ba-mo*), *ba* means the expanse of the Three Realms, *mo* ('female') means 'the place where suffering arises'. (As for the phrase) 'The three faces looked toward the threefold phenomenal existence', (the three are) the region

of heaven above, that of animals in the middle, and that of evil rebirth below".

The *Sūtra of the Magic Production of Offspring* of the *Ziji* says:[12] "From the circle of light of heaven, empty and infinite, a black light shone forth to the bottom of the sea; a vapour of black obscurity arose. From the obscurity a noxious body ripened—the cow of poison of living beings. On the cow three noxious heads appeared, four limbs and serpent's tail. As for the three noxious mouths of the three heads, hate was the mouth of the snake, delusion that of the pig, and desire-passion that of the cock. Thus the three poisons ripened into visible bodily form."

On the basis of the Scriptures which teach thus, Ignorance, which destroys Knowledge, i.e. Wisdom which comprehends Emptiness, and does not allow Wisdom to be born in the minds of humans—or which, even if it arises, spoils it by false views and obscures Being-as-it-is—(that Ignorance) is thereby made to be a cow. In that connection, as for the arising of passion, hate and delusion, it is established that the heads of the cock, pig and snake are their representations.

Outside this is the plan of the six classes of beings. The *Dzö* says: "From the three mouths of the cock of desire-passion (issue) gods, men and *miamci*; from the three mouths of the pig of delusion (issue) *lu*, animals and those near hell; from the three mounths of the snake of hate (issue beings in) hell, the ghosts and the lords-of-death." As for the demi-god's, although the establishing of them as a separate region is not clear here (i.e. is not explicitly mentioned in this quotation), it is in accordance with the teachings of Bon in general.

Outside this is the wheel of the twelve links. The *Trijé Lungten* says: "By ignorance creating the predispositions, consciousness shines forth.[13] In reality, that very perception is ignorance. Thus the links, the wheel-of-existence, arise; by this wheel, there is succession from one link to another. Just as, for example, the wheel of a chariot—its going up and coming down being without impediment—having gone up, the great bliss of the Body-of-Bon is obtained; having gone down, one hastens to the bottom of hell".[14]

The *Drönma* (*sGron ma*) says:[15] "The six classes of beings on the borders of the Three Realms took birth in the limitless whirl-from-beginningless-time, and the wheel-of-existence (consisting of) the twelve links was set in motion".

As for the representation thereof (i.e. of the twelve links), the *Dzö* says:

Ignorance is like a blind old woman;
Predispositions are like a potter girl;[16]
Consciousness is like a monkey appearing in a tree;
Name-and-form is like riches and goods;
The six sense-fields are like a mask;
Contact is like a bamboo cane into which a snake has entered;
Sensation is like water on red-hot iron;
Being is like a 'name-bearer' not finding the door;
Grasping is like a turkey drinking water;
Craving is like a man and a woman in union;
Birth is like bronze which has been cast;
Old age and death are shown as they are.

Outside that is the form of the Lord of Death.

Chapter 6 Notes

This chapter is an adapted version of Kværne 1981.

1 Karmay 1977: 1 (ref. no. 1-2) and Kværne 1974: 97 (ref. no. K2); see also Karmay 1972: 8 n. 4.

2 Karmay 1977: 158-159 (ref. no. 86,4) and Kværne 1974: 99 (ref. no. K16).

3 Karmay 1977: 2-4 (ref. no. 3) and Kværne 1974: 98 (ref. no. K5).

4 Stein 1959: 461-462, quoting A.H. Francke, *A Lower Ladakhi Version of the Kesar Saga*, Calcutta 1905. Stein convincingly suggests that the *sinpo* in question must be conceived as a ruminant. An overview of Tibetan cosmogonic myths is provided in Kværne 1991b.

5 I am grateful to Samṭen G. Karmay for this information. Tibetan *miamci* corresponds to Sanskrit *kinnara*, a kind of heavenly musician, especially attached to the court of Kubera, god of riches.

6 Waddell 1892 and Waddell 1894.

7 The exact meaning of *rgya bya* is not clear. The bird depicted on the thangka would seem to resemble a turkey.

8 The Tibetan text is found in Kværne 1981.

9 I am grateful to Samten G. Karmay who helped me translate the introductory verses.

10 Cf. note 1. The quotation is found on p.55 of the Delhi 1966 edition.

11 This is the commentary by Drenpa Namkha (see Chapter Five), printed together with the Delhi 1966 edition of the *Dzö*. The quotation is found on p.176.

12 *Ziji* vol. JA, ch.31, fol. 25bff (Delhi 1967-69 edition).

13 The first line of the quotation is not clear and has not been translated here. Cf. Kværne 1981: 283.

14 I am grateful to Samten G. Karmay for elucidating the term *gdar*, 'the bottom of hell'.

15 The quotation is from *sGron ma drug gi gdams pa*, "The Instruction of the Six Lamps", vol.PHA of *rDzogs pa chen po Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*, published in Lokesh Chandra (ed.), *History and Doctrine of Bon-po Niṣpanna-Yoga*, Śata-piṭaka Series vol.73, New Delhi 1968: 278.

16 The *Dradrel* p.180 has *rdza mkhan bu pho*, 'potter boy', which corresponds to what is shown on the thangka.

Further Visual Sources

The entries are in alphabetical order, according to the phonetic transcription. For each entry, the references are in chronological order; within each reference, the illustration is indicated first, followed by an indication of textual information. References to objects illustrated and described in this book are to the relevant Plates only, printed in italics.

Apsé (A bsve)
Plate 34
Chamma (Byams ma)
Plates 10 and 11
Bronze: Olsson 1974: Plate 5 (p.45), text p.23, and von Schroeder 1981: fig.131E (p.475); bronze: Lauf 1979: Plate 91, text 198; line drawing by the contemporary Bonpo master Lopön Tenzin Namdak: Namdak 1993: 34, text p.156.
Chimé Tsugpü ('Chi med gtsug phud)
Plate 18
Bronze: Karmay 1972: ill. no.4.
Ḍākiṇī
Plate 48
Painting from Samling (bSam gling) temple, Dolpo (Nepal): Tucci 1956: Front plate, text 30; bronze: *ḍākinī* Kun-grol-ma: von Schroeder 1987: 475 (fig. 131D), text 474.
Deshek Tsozhi, the Four Transcendent Lords (bDer gshegs gtso bzhi)
Plates 1 and 20
Small ritual card, *tsakli*, painted by a contemporary artist: Lehmann and Ullal 1981: 129 (without specification) and Kværne 1985a: Plate XXIIb; thangka: Kreijger 1989: 126.
Drenpa Namkha (Dran pa nam mkha')
Plates 42 (Karmay 1972: frontispiece), *43 and 44*
Thangka: Lauf 1973: 67, plate 70 (text p.66, not identified), and Lauf 1979: 193, plate 88 (text p.192).
Dülwé Shendrug, the Six Subduing Shen ('Dul ba'i gshen drug)
Ritual cards, *tsakli*: Lauf 1975: Tafel 12, text p.185 (cf. also Bayerische Staatsbibliothek 1978: 169, no.187); modern *tsakli*: Lehmann and Ullal 1981: 129 (three *tsakli* only) and Kværne 1985a:Plates XX and XXI (full set of six); six thangkas painted by contemporary artist, *ibid.* Plates XXXVII-XL.
Gaṇacakra
Thangka: Lauf 1971: plate 4, text p.30-31.
Küntu Zangpo (Kun tu bzang po)
Plate 12
Small ritual card, *tsakli*, painted by contemporary artist: Lehmann and Ullal 1981: 129 (without identification) and Kværne 1985a: Plate XXIIc; *tsakli* (upper deity, wrongly identified as Shenlha Wökar): Müller and Raunig 1982: 269.
Künzang Akor (Kun bzang a skor)
Plate 13 (Lo Bue 1991: Plate 62, text p.87)
Bronzes: Toyka-Fuong 1987: Pl. C43 and C44 (both wrongly identified as "gŚen-rab rnam-par rgyal-po" for rNam-par rGyal-ba, see Nampar Gyalwa); bronze: Pal 1990: 289 (S 50, text pp.290-291; the statue is not identified, and the syllable *A* is wrongly read as *A±*).
Künzang Gyalwa Düpa (Kun bzang rgyal ba 'dus pa)
Plates 15 and 16
Thangka: Lauf 1971: 35 (pl.2), text p.29; bronze: Béguin 1995: 480 (no. 413); bronze: von Schroeder 1981: 475 (fig.131F), text 474, and Kreijger 1989: 71; statue on the altar of the temple at Thini, Mustang (Nepal), stucco: Henss 1993: 83, text p.82; *tsakli* (variant form without ornaments): Müller and Raunig 1982: 269 (cf. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek 1978: 169).
Künzang Gyalwa Gyatso (Kun bzang rgyal ba rgya mtsho)
Plate 17
Magyü Sangchog Tartug (Ma rgyud gsang mchog mthar thug)
Plate 24
Thangka: Essen and Thingo 1989: 216, Plate II-450, text pp.215-216 (referred to under the name "Sangdag Sangchog Gyalpo"), central section in Lauf 1979: plate 83, text 183 (wrongly identified as "Garuḍa-Hevajra"); line-drawing: Namdak 1993: 116, text pp.157-158.
Mawé Sengé, the Lion of Speech (sMra ba'i seng ge)
Modern thangka (with the deity in five-fold form): Kværne 1988: 156.
Meri (Me ri)
Plate 31 (Auboyer and Béguin 1977: Plate 204, text p.186)
Thangka: Pal 1984: Plate 52, text p.105; Essen and Thingo 1989: 217, Plate II-451, text pp.216-218 and Thangka-Kalender 1982 (detail, bottom left-hand corner; in Müller and Raunig 1982: 271).
Nampar Gyalwa (rNam par rgyal ba)
Plates 19, 20 and 21
Thangka: Draghi 1975: Plate 2 (only identified as "Bon Diety", *sic*); bronze: von Schroeder 1981: 475 (fig. 131B), text 474; bronze: Essen and Thingo 1989: 219, pl.II-456.
Sangpo Bumtri (Sangs po 'bum khri)
Plates 5 (Lauf 1969: Plate 50, text p.22-24; Lommel 1974: Plate 131, text p.214-215; Lauf 1979: Plate 87, text p.190) *and 6; Plate 9*

Miniature (Berlin ms.): Hoffmann 1943: plate following p.8, Hoffmann 1950: Tafel 11, Hoffmann 1958: 877, and Schuh 1981: Tafel 5 (to the right); mural from a stupa in Dolpo (Nepal): Tucci 1956: Fig.12; detail of a thangka (upper right): Tucci 1967: Plate 79; modern thangka: Orofino 1985: front cover.

Sangwa Düpa (gSang ba 'dus pa)

Plate 40

Satrig Ersang (Sa trig er sangs)

Plates 2 and 3

Miniature (Berlin ms.): Hoffmann 1943: plate following p.16, and Hoffmann 1958: 878; mural from a stupa in Dolpo (Nepal): Snellgrove 1961: Plate Xa; thangka (goddess in the centre, surrounded by 36 stupas): Essen and Thingo 1989: 220, Plate II-457.

Shenlha Wökar (gShen lha 'od dkar)

Plate 4 (Lauf 1972: Plate 49; Auboyer and Béguin 1977: Plate 203, text p.186)

Miniature (Berlin ms.): Hoffmann 1943: plate following p.16, Hoffmann 1958: 879, and Schuh 1981: Tafel 5 (to the left); mural from a stupa in Dolpo (Nepal): Tucci 1956: Fig. 13, and Snellgrove 1961: Plate IXc; thangka from Samling monastery in Dolpo, *ibid.* Plate XXVI; detail of thangka (upper left): Tucci 1967: Plate 79.

Shenrap Miwo (gShen rab mi bo)

Plates 7 and 8; Plate 23

Miniature (Berlin ms.): Hoffmann 1943: plate following p.8, Hoffmann 1950: Tafel 1, Hoffmann 1956: frontispiece, and Hoffmann 1958: 875; thangka: Hoffmann 1958: 873; thangka from Samling Monastery, Dolpo (Nepal): Snellgrove 1961: Plate XXXII; modern line drawing: Lauf 1975: 179 and Bonpo Bulletin 1990:9; thangka (throne supported by lions): Lauf 1979: Tafel 85, text p.186; thangka: Kværne 1986: 37, Fig.1; bronze: Essen and Thingo 1989: 215, Pl.II-449; modern line drawing: Namdak 1993: 138, text p.159; Nakhi thangka: Rock 1952: Plate XX; See also Nampar Gyalwa and Tritsug Gyalwa.

Sipé Gyalmo (Srid pa'i rgyal mo)

Plate 33

Modern thangka: Namdak 1993:front cover, text p.155.

Takla Mebar (sTag la me 'bar)

Plates 37, 38 and 39

Bronze: Karmay 1972: fig. VI; thangka: Lauf 1979: 197, Plate 90, text p.196; Nakhi thangka: Rock 1952: Plate XXV.

Tritsug Gyalwa (Khri gtsug rgyal ba)

Plate 22

Modern line-drawing: Namdak 1993: frontispiece, text p.156.

Trowo Tsochog Khagying (Khro bo gtso mchog mkha' 'gying)

Plates 25 and 26 (Lauf 1972: Plate 49)

Bronze: Karmay 1972: ill. no. V (attributes missing); line-drawing: Kværne 1990: 121 and Namdak 1993: 76, text p.157.

Tsewang Rigzin (Tshe dbang rig 'dzin)

Thangka: Tucci 1949: Plate 155, text vol.II: 553-554; thangka ("according to the Tradition of Tibet"): Auboyer and Béguin 1977: 189, plate 205 (text 186), Béguin 1990: 88, plate 44, detail (central figure) Lauf 1979: 195, plate 89 (text p.194).

Welchen Gekhö (dBal chen ge khod)

Plate 30

Welsé Ngampa (dBal gsas rngam pa)

Plates 27 (Lauf 1971: Plate 3 (p.36), text p.29-30, detail, central deity only), *28 and 29* (Béguin 1990: 93, plate 47, Béguin 1995: 481 (no. 414) and Béguin 1995: 480 (no. 412)

Statue in temple in Dolpo (Nepal): Snellgrove 1961: Pl. XXXIIa, text pp.49-50; thangka: Lauf 1971: 36, Abbildung 3, text pp.29-30; woodblock print: The Bonpo Bulletin 1990: 36 (pages not numbered); thangka: Béguin 1990: 94, Plate 47, text p.93 (wrongly identified as Tsochog).

Yeshen Chusum, the Thirteen Primeval Shen (Ye gshen bcu gsum)

Modern ritual card, *tsakli*: Kværne 1985a: Plate XXa (showing all thirteen Shen); set of thirteen *tsakli*: *ibid.* Plates XLI-XLVII; three *tsakli* from the same set: Helffer 1994: Pl.VII; thangka: Tucci 1967: pl.79, includes four figures of the same type as those reproduced in Kværne 1985a, but which are not, however, entirely identical.

Zangsa Ringtsün (bZang za ring btsun)

Plate 41

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Index